EUGENE DELACROIX

PORTRAIT OF EUGÈNE DELACROIX PAINTED BY HIMSELF

Frontispiece

EUGENE DELACROIX

BY

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TO

MARIE SOUVESTRE

IN GRATEFUL MEMORY

D. B.

This book could not have been written without my husband's knowledge and help.

D. B.

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INTRODUCTION

Eugène Delacroix is little more than a name in England. At a time when the Press is flooded with works on art, great and small, when the obscurest predecessor of Botticelli has his monograph, and the most insignificant of Royal Academicians is barely allowed to turn in his grave without his two volumes of Life and Letters, the great master of French Romanticism has not been found worthy of much more than a passing reference. But what else can be expected of a country whose directors of public taste, in the teeth of enlightened criticism, have so long and steadfastly ignored the vital movements which have made the Art of the nineteenth century supremely fruitful and inspiring? It was Eugène Delacroix's mighty brush that gave the fullest expression to the passionate emotions of his

age, and no other of its great leaders, not Victor Hugo himself, is so representative of the ardent and troubled generation of 1830; but Delacroix, like so many other of his great countrymen, whose fame has been established by the test of time and the verdict of posterity, is practically unrepresented in the Nation's galleries.

And yet, where else but in the country that produced Marlowe and Webster and Shakespeare, Blake and Scott and Byron, should Eugène Delacroix expect to find understanding and sympathy? It is indeed a curious anomaly that England, who reproaches Racine with coldness and Voltaire with lack of earnestness, should have no welcome for Delacroix, whose whole art, steeped as it is in terror and pity, seems to be inspired by the very breath of her Elizabethans—for Delacroix, whose far-reaching imagination excelled, as "none other's since Shakespeare, in fusing into one mysterious whole the spirit of tragedy and the spirit of dreams."* By what irony is it that the apostle

* Charles Baudelaire, *L'Art Romantique.*

of Constable, the ardent admirer of Turner, the inspired interpreter of Shakespeare and Byron and Scott, should find no place of honour among their countrymen ?

Delacroix, moreover, great artist as he is, has other claims to interest and regard. A man of wide culture and ardent temperament, passionately devoted to all the arts, an enlightened reader, an enthusiast of poetry and music and acting, he lived at a time of extraordinary intellectual and artistic exuberance, and came into personal contact with nearly all the master spirits of his age. For forty years he kept a journal which would alone suffice to make the reputation of a smaller man. In it he recorded his aspirations, his struggles, his toils, his pleasures, his rare triumphs ; here we see his inmost soul revealed ; his love of Nature, his worship of art, his constant preoccupation with the technical side of painting, his strenuous endeavours to guide his genius by the light of reason and reflection, and to evolve, from the observation of his own gifts and the appreciation of others, a sound and

adequate theory of æsthetics: all this, and more, we find in these rich and illuminating pages.

In this little book it would be impossible to analyse or even to mention all Delacroix's works. The number of them is so great that their names alone would almost fill this volume. There is no kind of painting that he did not touch: vast mural decorations treating religious, mythological and allegorical subjects, large canvases depicting historical scenes and battles, or illustrating the works of great authors, besides portraits, landscapes, interiors, animals and still life; while some of his most remarkable achievements are drawings, lithographs, and etchings. All that we can hope to do is to awaken or rekindle interest in a great artist and a many-sided personality, to point out the most striking and individual characteristics of his art, and to persuade the reader next time he visits the Louvre to devote some portion of his time to contemplating the heroic beauties of *Les Croisés*, the unutterable pathos of *Le Massacre de Scio*, and the melancholy charm of *Les Femmes d'Alger*.

INTRODUCTION

Delacroix, though neglected in England, has been exhaustively studied in France, where he is considered by critics of authority to be the greatest painter of the nineteenth century. We do not propose to do more here than put before the reader some gleanings from the abundant material that already exists. As much as possible we shall make use of his own letters and his journal, admirably edited by Messrs. Flat and Piot, and we shall often have recourse to Charles Baudelaire's prose-works, *L'Art Romantique* and *Curiosités Esthétiques*, which were written during the great man's life, or immediately after his death. The estimate of Delacroix's work contained in these two volumes of art-criticism is grounded on truths so fundamental, and is so far-seeing in its comprehension and sympathy, that posterity has little to add.

EUGENE DELACROIX

CHAPTER I

Delacroix's birth—His parentage—Guérin's studio —Géricault—Early friendships—The Fieldings—Bonington—Light loves—Enthusiasm for art and poetry—Ill-health—First pictures—*Dante et Virgile*

Charles Baudelaire, in a page of magnificent prose, whose cadences and mysterious suggestiveness might have been inspired by De Quincey himself, has left us a description of Eugène Delacroix as he knew him. We transcribe it here as a fitting accompaniment to the frontispiece portrait of Delacroix by himself, thinking that no more appropriate introduction to the study of the man and his works can be found than these two pictures, which neither a halting translation nor an inadequate reproduction can deprive of all their magic.

"He was compact of energy, but of an energy which sprang from the power of the nerves and the will, for physically he was frail and delicate. The eyes of the tiger watchful of its prey have less fiery a gleam, its muscles are less tense with quivering impatience than those of the great painter, as with his whole soul he flung himself on an idea or endeavoured to grasp a dream. The very character of his physiognomy, his features, which might have been a Peruvian's or a Malay's, his eyes which were large and black, but which had become narrowed by the perpetual efforts of a concentrated gaze, and seemed to drink in and absorb and savour the light, his glossy and abundant hair, his determined forehead, his tight-drawn lips which had acquired an expression of cruelty from the constant straining of the will—in a word, his whole person seemed to suggest an exotic origin.

"Many a time, while watching him, has it occurred to me to hark back in dreams to the ancient sovereigns of Mexico, to Montezuma, whose hand, skilled in sacrifice, was able in a single day to immolate three thousand human

beings on the pyramidal altar of the sun, or to one of those Indian princes who, amidst the splendours of the most gorgeous revels, still keeps in the innermost depths of his eyes a kind of unsatisfied eagerness, an inexplicable yearning, something, as it were, of the regret for, something of the memory of, things unknown. . . The moral aspect of his works, too (if one may speak of morals in connection with painting), is marked with the visible imprint of Moloch. They are all desolation and fire and slaughter; they bear witness to the eternal and incurable barbarity of man. Burning and smoking towns, murdered victims, ravished women, even the very children are thrown under the horses' hoofs or thrust upon the poignards of their raving mothers; his whole work, indeed, may be likened to a terrible hymn composed in honour of Fate and Grief irremediable."*

Ferdinand Victor Eugène Delacroix was born at Charenton Saint-Maurice, near Paris, on April 26, 1798, or in revolutionary style, better suited to the son of a zealous Republican,

* *L'Art Romantique*

on the 7th of Floréal in the sixth year of the French Republic, one and indivisible. He was the youngest of four children, of whom the two eldest were more than twenty years older than himself. His father, Charles Delacroix, who died when Eugène was only seven years old, was a man of some distinction, and Eugène, throughout his career, enjoyed all such advantages as can be bestowed by social connections on poverty and integrity. The son of the well-to-do land agent of the Comte de Belval, Charles Delacroix, started life as a lawyer, became private secretary to Turgot, and was elected deputy to the National Convention, where he showed himself an opponent of the clergy and was one of those who voted the death of Louis XVI. In 1796 the Directory appointed him Minister for Foreign Affairs, but he was superseded a few months later by Talleyrand, receiving in compensation the post of French Ambassador to Holland. He ended his career as Prefect, first of Marseilles and lastly of Bordeaux, where he died in 1805. From the slight records which remain of him, Charles Delacroix seems to have possessed in a marked degree that indomitable

energy and almost Roman stoicism which characterised so many of the fierce and sombre Republicans of those terrible days. Those who are interested in the workings of heredity may recognise in the son some of that heroic pride and unflinching tenacity which led his father to jest in dignified terms with his friends and surgeon while undergoing a long and excruciating operation, or, on another occasion, to refuse with scorn the escort offered him in a moment of danger as an "escort of traitors." From the point of view of heredity, too, it is instructive to note that Delacroix's mother came from a family of artists. Victoire Œben was the daughter of the celebrated cabinet-maker Jean François Œben, whose taste and elegance were devoted to beautifying the furniture of Madame de Pompadour. On the death of Œben, Riesener, a still more celebrated cabinet-maker, who worked for Louis XVI., became her stepfather. Her half-brother, Henri Riesener, was a painter who encouraged his young nephew, Eugène, in his choice of a profession, and whose son Léon, a painter also, was one of the most intimate friends of his more illustrious cousin. Madame

Delacroix appears to have been a woman of the utmost charm and distinction, with an aristocratic grace and ease of manner, acquired in the great world. Gossip, indeed, has gone so far as to suggest that she found favour in the eyes of no less a personage than Talleyrand himself, and that the likeness between Eugène and the great diplomat was not due to chance alone. This, however, is a baseless conjecture which need not be regarded seriously. It is enough to note here that at a time when the habits and dress of artists were apt to be of the flamboyant style, Delacroix was remarkable for the correctness of his bearing and the polish of his manner. In his youth the love of elegance, which he doubtless learnt from his mother, was not without a touch of dandyism. To the last he loved society, and was an accomplished man of the world and a perfect gentleman ; cold, brilliant, at his ease, " hiding," says Baudelaire, " out of a kind of chastity, his ardent passion for the good and beautiful—the crater of a volcano concealed by a bouquet of flowers." " I think," he goes on to say, " that it was one of the great preoccupations of his life to dissimulate the

indignations of his heart, and to avoid looking like a man of genius."*

Delacroix's artistic bent showed itself very early; the love of music, which was a passion with him all his life, was the first to develop, and he tells us that at the age of seven he amazed his music-master by the precocity of his talent. After the death of his father, his mother settled in Paris and sent young Eugène to the Lycée of Louis le Grand. Philarète Chasles, the well-known journalist, was at school with him, and has left us a description of the strange child,

" . . with his olive-hued brow and flashing eye, his mobile countenance, his cheeks early sunken, and delicately mocking mouth. He was slight and graceful, and his thick, black, curly hair betrayed a southern origin. . . . At school, Eugène Delacroix covered his copy-books with drawings and heads. Real talent is so utterly innate and spontaneous that at the age of eight and nine this marvellous artist reproduced attitudes, invented fore-shortenings, and drew and varied the outlines of everything, pursuing,

* *L'Art Romantique.*

torturing and multiplying form in all its aspects, with an obstinacy akin to fury."

When Delacroix was sixteen his mother died, leaving some small property to be divided between her three surviving children, General Charles Delacroix, Madame Henriette de Verninac, and Eugène; this was, however, speedily dissipated by an unfortunate lawsuit, and the portion which eventually came to the youngest son consisted simply of two silver forks and spoons and a gilt china vase. Delacroix was thus entirely dependent on his own efforts, and, in spite of his sober tastes and freedom from family claims, it was not until the later years of his life that the question of money ceased to be a matter of continual anxiety to him. It was owing, as we have seen, to the encouragement of his uncle, Henri Riesener, that he was able to choose painting as his profession. On leaving the Lycée, at about the age of sixteen, he entered the École des Beaux Arts, and Riesener placed him in Guérin's studio. Guérin was a pupil of David's, and had in all docility yielded over any personality he might have possessed, to be bound and gagged

by that mighty autocrat. He is chiefly remembered now for the fact that his studio gave hospitality (little else) to the two greatest of the rebels who abolished his master's sway—Géricault and Delacroix. In Guérin's studio the two made acquaintance. Delacroix was some years younger than Géricault, and looked up to him with passionate admiration. He tells us how Géricault allowed him to see *The Raft of the Medusa* (exhibited in 1819) while he was working at it. "So violent was the impression that it made upon me," says Delacroix, "that on leaving his studio I began running like a madman, and ran through the streets the whole way home." Géricault's untimely death in 1824 greatly moved him. On the day he hears of it he writes in his journal:

"Though he was not precisely my friend, this misfortune pierces my heart; it made me fly from my work and destroy all I had done. Poor Géricault! how often I shall think of you. I imagine your soul will sometimes come and hover near me while I work. . . . Adieu, poor young man."*

* Journal, January 27, 1824.

If Delacroix found Guérin's teaching unsympathetic, he was able to turn for guidance to more inspiring masters. It was in these early days that he began that habit, which he continued throughout his life, of copying the great painters of old. The picture gallery at the Louvre had been opened to the public by the Convention for the express purpose of forming the taste of young artists and encouraging them in the path of glory; it had been enriched by Napoleon, who looted the cities of Italy of their works of art in order to adorn his capital. Delacroix was not too young to have been able to admire in the Louvre the great Veroneses, Raphaels and Titians before they were restored to their original owners in 1816. Indeed, his sole acquaintance with the great Italian decorative masters with whom he had so much in common, was made in Paris, for he was destined never to visit them in their native land. Many of the early entries in his diary show us with what love and zeal he worked at copying his favourite masters—Velasquez and Rubens no less than Raphael and Veronese.

It is from these days of his life as a student

that Delacroix's first letters date. They are written for the most part to his boy friends, Guillemardet and Pierret. The three formed a band of faithful comrades, whose boyish custom of celebrating their friendship by dining together every New Year's Eve was continued for many years, and only interrupted by death. These early letters show us indeed, an ardent youth glowing with all the enthusiasm that fired the opening years of the century. In page after page he pours forth his passionate regard for his friends, "Divine and holy friendship!"* "Yes, truly great friendship is like great genius."† He tells of his admiration for poetry and painting. "In the midst of dissipations, when I remember some line of beautiful poetry, when I think of some sublime painting, my soul grows indignant and treads under foot the vain pasturage of common men."‡ He tells how—astonishing as it seems even to himself—he weeps as he reads Virgil, and he translates for his friend a famous passage of the 10th eclogue.§ He recommends Horace as

* To Pierret, 1820.
† To Pierret, 1818.
‡ To Pierret, 1818.
§ *Ibid.*

the "greatest physician of the soul."* His eyes frown, he gnashes his teeth with rage as he reads of the misery of Tasso.† The fate of André Chénier calls forth imprecations from him; Rousseau's passion does not satisfy him.‡ He frets against his own inability to express the burning emotions that consume him.§ He trembles and scarcely dares to speak of his ambition to pluck the "golden bough" of fame.‖

"I think of Poussin in his retirement, delighting in the study of the human heart and the masterpieces of the ancients, little heeding Richelieu's academies and pensions; I think of Raphael in his mistress' arms, passing from the Fornarina to the St. Cecilia, composing his sublime pictures as easily as other people breathe and speak—all with simplicity and gentle inspiration. Oh, my friend, when I think of these great models, I feel only too deeply how far I am, not only from their divine spirit, but even from their modest candour. Teach me to strangle these fits of ambition."¶

* To Guillemardet, 1818.
† To Pierret, 1819.
‡ *Ibid.*
§ To Pierret, 1818.
‖ *Ibid.*
¶ *Ibid.*

Another life-long friendship, which dates from his eighteenth year, was that with Soulier. Soulier had many English connections, among whom were the family of Fieldings, four brothers, all water-colour painters, of whom the most distinguished was Copley. Soulier instructed Delacroix in the art of water-colour painting, at that time practically unknown in France, and introduced him to Thales Fielding, then studying in Paris. The two young men chummed together for some time, and Delacroix flung himself into the study of English with his accustomed ardour. Soulier was his professor, and he was soon able to steep himself in the pages of Byron and Shakespeare, the two poets who, together with Dante and Goethe, most helped to colour his imagination. Another English acquaintance that Delacroix made at this time was that of Bonington, whom he met while copying at the Louvre, a tall, silent youth engaged in making water-colour studies, generally after the Flemish landscapes. "Already," wrote Delacroix many years later, "he was surprisingly skilful in that kind of painting, which was then an English novelty. In my opinion,

though modern artists may have qualities of strength or accuracy superior to Bonington's, no one among the moderns, nor perhaps among his predecessors, possesses that lightness of touch which makes his pictures like diamonds that ravish and flatter the eye." The two met again during Delacroix's visit to England in 1825, and struck up a fast friendship. On their return to Paris, Bonington worked for some time in Delacroix's studio. "There's a terrible lot to be learned in the company of such a strapping fellow as he is; I am none the worse for it, I give you my word," writes Delacroix to Soulier in 1826. Bonington died in 1828 and Delacroix never lost an opportunity of paying honour to the friend he loved and admired.

It was friendship that absorbed the greater part of Delacroix's affections; all the tenderness, all the emotion, all the passion he could spare from his art he bestowed upon his men friends. Light loves he had in his youth, but with surprising jealousy he never let a woman enter his heart or touch his intellect. "A slight thing," he writes of one Lisette, "her memory will not pursue me as a passion, will

be but a flower on my path." "Not love," he writes of another, "only a tickling of the nerves."* And yet he had his dreams of a worthy mate. "A wife who is your equal is the greatest of goods. I would rather she were superior to me at every point than the contrary." But where to find such a one, and had he found her, would he not have dreaded losing the mastery of his own soul? "Unhappy!" he exclaims on some occasion when, doubtless, he had been more than ordinarily touched. "What if I were to conceive a real passion?"† And as he grows older he shakes off even the slight attraction which his youth had felt for other loves than art. "As for the seductions which disturb the greater number of men, they never troubled me much, and now less than ever."‡ Occasionally, with advancing age, he laments. In his fiftieth year he makes "bitter reflections on the profession of artist—the isolation—the sacrifice of nearly all the feelings that inspire ordinary men." But, in reality, his was the temperament of a solitary. Too proud, too

* Journal, June, 1823. † *Ibid*, May, 1823.
‡ *Ibid.*, February 27, 1824.

sensitive, too fastidious, too reserved, to let another human being penetrate into the inmost recesses of his heart, he nevertheless suffers from this

"miserable necessity of being constantly face to face with oneself. This is the reason that the society of agreeable people is so congenial to me; they make you think for a moment that they are in a manner yourself; but only too soon you fall again into your melancholy singleness. What! the dearest friend, the most beloved, the most deservedly beloved woman, will never be able to bear a portion of the burden? Yes, but only for a few moments; they too, have to drag their cloak of lead."*

And again:

"I have two, three, four friends. Well! I am obliged to be a different man to each of them, or, rather, to show each of them the side he understands. It is one of the greatest miseries never to be known and understood

* Journal, January 25, 1824.

in one's entirety, by one and the same man. And when I think of it, it seems to me that this is the sovereign curse of life—this inevitable solitude to which the heart is condemned." *

And so the immense need for self-expression, which, according to some critics, is the very essence of the romantic genius, found in Delacroix one outlet only—that of his art.

"When one abandons oneself entirely to one's soul the capricious creature opens out to you and gives you the greatest of all happiness—that of displaying it under a thousand forms and of communicating it to others—that of studying oneself, of painting oneself continually in one's works. I am not speaking of mediocre people. But what is this frenzied desire, not only to compose but to get printed—apart from the pleasure of praise? It is the joy of reaching all those souls that are capable of understanding yours. And so it happens that all such souls meet in your painting. . . . What matters even the suffrage of your friends?

* Journal, June 9, 1823.

It is simple enough that they should understand you, or, rather, it matters nothing to you. But to live in the minds of others—*that* is what is intoxicating. You can add one more to those that have seen nature in a manner peculiar to themselves. What they all painted is new because of themselves—and if you painted the same thing it would still be new. They painted their soul while they painted things, and *your* soul demands its turn likewise. And why be recalcitrant to its demand? Is it more ridiculous than the demand for sleep, which your limbs make when they are tired—the demand of your whole physical nature? And if those who came first have not done enough for *you*, they have not done enough for others either. The very people who believe that everything has been said and discovered will hail you also as new, and will once more shut the door behind you. They will once more say that everything has been said. As a man in the decline of age thinks that nature is degenerating, so vulgar-minded men who have no comment to make on what has already been said, think that nature has permitted only to a few, and only

in the beginning, to say new and striking things. What there was to say in the time of those immortal spirits was open to the eyes of all their contemporaries also, and yet, for all that, no great number of them were tempted to seize what was new and inscribe it in haste, so as to forestall the harvest of posterity. The novelty is in the mind that creates, not in the nature that is painted. . . . You, who know that there is always something new, show it to them in parts they have ignored. Make them think that they have never heard the nightingale spoken of, nor the spectacle of the vast sea, nor all those things that their coarse organs are incapable of feeling unless some one has taken the trouble to feel it for them first. Do not be troubled for a language. If you cultivate your soul she will find the light and show herself; she will make for herself a language that will be well worth the hemistiches of such a one, and the prose of so and so. What! you are original, you say, and yet your ardour is only kindled by reading Byron, Dante, &c. You take this fever for the power of production—it is rather the need of imitation. No! No! they have not said the

hundredth part of what there is to be said."*

So exuberant is his nature in these youthful days that it seems as though one art were not sufficient to satisfy the thirst of his soul for expression. Again and again he cries :

"Why am I not a poet ?"† "How I wish I were a poet ! . . . How much there is to do !"‡ "The upshot of my days is always the same : an infinite desire for what one never gets ; an emptiness impossible to fill, an extreme itch for producing in every sort of manner, for struggling as much as possible against Time as it carries us away, and against the distractions which throw a veil over our souls."§

His frail body was early shattered by this force which devoured and inspired him.

"I have in me something that is often stronger than my body. . . . There are some

* Journal, May 14, 1824.
† *Ibid.*, April 25, 1824.
‡ *Ibid.*, May 11, 1824.
§ *Ibid.*, April 24, 1824.

people in whom the internal influence is almost non-existent. In me it has greater energy than the other. Without it I should succumb —but it will consume me in the end. (It is imagination that I mean, imagination which masters and leads me.)" *

> " A fiery soul, which, working out its way,
> Fretted the pigmy body to decay,
> And o'er informed the tenement of clay."

In 1820 a chill, caught during a journey, brought on an attack of low fever from which he suffered more or less acutely during two years, and to which he was subject all his life. It was during these two years that he produced his first known works, *The Vierge du Sacré Cœur*—a commission passed on to him by Géricault—and the *Vierge des Moissons;* both are highly reminiscent of Raphael, and are of little interest; his true career begins with the celebrated *Dante et Virgile.* This picture, which he painted in two and a half feverish months, working at it often twelve and thirteen hours a day, was exhibited in the Salon of 1822. It raised its author in a moment to fame, and

* Journal, October 8, 1822.

evoked the first of those clamours of abuse which were barely stilled before his death. But we must consider more fully the conditions of contemporary art if we are to understand why this work was hailed as a signal of revolt; why, in the words of Baudelaire, it created so "profound a disturbance," and why it was greeted with "astonishment, stupefaction, anger, insults, enthusiasm, and bursts of insolent laughter."

CHAPTER II

Davidism — Its origin — Its doctrines — Gros — Géricault — *Le Radeau de la Méduse* — Its realism — *Dante et Virgile* — Its reception by the critics

In 1822 "Davidism," though already weakened by the temporary defection of Gros, and rudely shakened by the appearance of Géricault's *Radeau de la Méduse* in 1819, still reigned supreme in French art. For nearly thirty years all French artists, with the two exceptions of Gros and Prudhon, had shown themselves unquestioning disciples of the school which had been founded by that distinguished artist whose masterful character and potent personality reduced all art to a system, and succeeded in imposing that system on a docile generation. David, the revolutionary, at the beginning of his career had broken away from the charming and frivolous traditions of the eighteenth century, and had sternly set his face against

the trifling, the elegancies, the sensualities of Lancret, Fragonard, and Boucher. He inaugurated the grand style and the era of heroics in art, as his contemporaries introduced them into public life. It is obvious that he thus accomplished a revolution by which his successors profited no less than he, and which prepared and made easy the way for Gros, Géricault, Ingres and Delacroix, to speak only of the greatest. For the romantics, in their revolt, were less different from David, their great enemy, than David from his predecessors, and it was he who provided them with the thews and sinews for the fight in which he was overborne. Delacroix himself always speaks of him with sympathy and admiration :

" He was struck in a happy moment by the languor and feebleness of the shameful productions of his time ; the philosophical ideas which were then gathering strength, ideas of greatness and popular liberty, no doubt mingled with the disgust he felt for the school from which he issued. . . . He had the courage to renounce all his habits ; he shut himself up,

so to speak, with the Laocoon, the Antinous and the Gladiator, with all the masculine conceptions of antiquity. . . . He was the father of the whole modern school in painting and sculpture; he reformed even architecture, even the furniture of daily use, and replaced a bastard and Pompadour style by Pompeii and Herculaneum." (Journal III., pp. 384, 385.)

But it is time to examine in a little more detail that system which, according to its devotees, was derived from the eternal principles of Beauty, Truth and Reason, and which claimed to be as absolute and immutable as those Platonic Ideas themselves. The chief dogma of this cult, as rigid and inflexible as any that have bound the minds of man, was that the nearest approach to the Beau Ideal permitted to the human race had been attained by the Greeks, and that in consequence all art must conform as closely as possible to theirs. Unfortunately for the worshippers, the chief specimens of Greek art known at that time were those belonging to a decadent period (neither the Elgin marbles nor the Venus of Milo were accessible before

the year 1816), so that the works from which they drew their inspiration were without character in themselves or merely the feeble and attenuated copies of ancient Rome. These works, moreover, belonged to the art of sculpture, and painting was thus constrained to obey the requirements of a different medium and forego her own birthright. Her domain was narrowed and hedged in; portraits, genre painting, still life, and subjects from modern history were proscribed; landscape denied the very right to existence. Mythology, allegory and ancient history were alone considered worthy of illustration, as alone giving occasions for representing the human body, either nude or draped in the antique fashion. These subjects again were further restricted by the elimination of all scenes of dramatic or passionate import, lest the beauty and rhythm of line and the harmony and proportion of the whole should be marred by the expression of violent emotions. In the pictures of the School we find only the monotonous perfection of rounded and well-modelled limbs, classical features and straight noses. The artist strives to give his personages gestures that shall be dignified and

restrained, and too often they fall into stilted and theatrical attitudinising. He eschews all effects of light and shade that might destroy purity and correctness of line, as he understands them; his drawing is constantly made to conform to the prejudices of an eye that has been educated solely in the contemplation of casts. He fills in his contours with a dull and uniform colour, for colour to the sincere Davidian is a vain and frivolous accessory, and serves only to distract attention from the real purpose of the work, which should aim at moral elevation as well as at ideal beauty. Everything in the picture must be equally dwelt upon, equally emphasised; there is no sacrifice, no mystery, no gloom. Texture and ambience are lost in the finished precision of a piece of statuary. "These pictures," says Delacroix, "have no epidermis . . . they lack the atmosphere, the lights, the reflections which blend into a harmonious whole objects the most dissimilar in colour" (Journal, January 13, 1857). Thus art became schooled to a doctrine and a science. "She must have no other guide than the torch of reason," says David, who lays down as a condition of

entrance to his studio that the pupil should know Latin !

This elaborate structure was necessarily doomed to destruction ; for though classicism as taught by David and his pupils still drags on a lingering and degenerate existence within the shelter of Academic portals, it has lost, with the enthusiasm, the conviction and the sincerity of its first professors, all that heroic grandeur which made it a vital force during its day. Chief among the causes which early weakened David's system was the growing ascendency of a more powerful, though hardly a more determined, autocrat. Napoleon's victories had to be recorded and his triumphs illustrated. The delineators of antique drapery and classical features, who had resolutely ignored all differences of light and climate, found themselves constrained to represent the braided uniforms, plumed hats and brilliant robes of the Emperor's army and court, and to depict the varied scenes of his victories and the different nationalities of the vanquished. David bitterly complained of the necessity which turned him aside from true art to the study of " boots and gold-braid."

One painter alone found congenial opportunities in such subjects as were furnished by contemporary history—Gros, who by the choice of his material and his manner of treating it, showed himself the true precursor of Romanticism. When still a young man, Gros left France to follow Bonaparte's army during the Italian campaigns. He completely detached himself from David's teaching, though at the same time remaining uninfluenced by his admiration for the great Venetian and Lombard pictures which, with the benefit of his advice, Napoleon selected to send to Paris as national spoils. Untouched alike by modern and ancient art, his true talent was developed by his passionate love for soldiering. His picture of *Bonaparte at Arcole*, exhibited in 1802, is remarkable for its life, movement and realism. It lacks, perhaps, the striking energy of expression which characterises a pen-and-ink drawing done at the same time of the hard, nervous, vulture-like countenance of the General-in-Chief of the French armies in Italy; but it is a work so personal, so spirited and so effective that it rivets the attention. The pictures that followed—*Les Pestiférés de Jaffa*, *La Bataille*

d'Aboukir, *La Bataille des Pyramides*, and, above all, the wonderful *Bataille d'Eylau*, show nearly all the qualities that Delacroix's genius later on brought to a higher degree of intensity and concentration, but which are none the less present in Gros. Like Delacroix, he was alert to seize the pictorial and dramatic contrast of the moving or tragic scenes he represented, and to express them with every variation of form and colour. Before Delacroix, he recognised the mystery and charm of the East, he was attracted by the ferocity of wild beasts and drew inspiration from the great romantic masters, Shakespeare and Dante. He opened the eyes of his generation to vast realms of unexplored country, flung down the barriers that had fenced it off, and bade those that would, enter and make free of it.*

* In spite of Gros' intense individuality, in spite of the liberty he enjoyed during the Empire, his history furnishes the most striking example of David's tyranny. At the Restoration when the old regicide was exiled from Paris, he sent for Gros and imperatively charged him as the chief representative of art in France to uphold the great traditions of the School and abandon the futilities that had so long engaged him. "Look to your Plutarch," said David; and Gros trembled and obeyed. But his classical works were dismal failures, and the unfortunate artist drowned himself in the Seine.

The first to profit by Gros' example was Géricault; this brilliant young man early leapt into fame; the clamour aroused by his picture of the *Radeau de la Méduse*, 1819 (though partly political in its origin), drew attention to the fact that David's rule was no longer unquestioned, and that rebellion had arisen in the ranks. Though Géricault has generally been termed the first of the Romantic school, his talent seemed rather to incline to realism. His studies of English racecourses, of stables and grooms, of cuirassiers and their horses, show an interest in the surroundings of modern life which in those days was equally audacious and unparalleled. Even his great shipwreck, powerful and dramatic as it is, leaves us with a sense of painful and corporeal reality, unillumined by the gleam of almost unearthly horror, which in Delacroix's *Barque de Don Juan* seems to torture our minds rather than our bodies. Had Géricault lived, instead of developing into one of the chiefs of Romanticism, we wonder whether he might not rather have evolved on other lines, and put himself at the head of a Realistic movement. This movement was destined to be initiated a

generation later by Courbet. But how different would have been the result if it had been directed by a man as intelligent and open-minded as Géricault, instead of by the coarse and soulless Courbet! As it was, Géricault's untimely death left Delacroix alone at the head of the revolt against pseudo-classicism, and it was the school of imagination and romance which triumphed for the time being. Delacroix's picture of *Dante et Virgile*, exhibited in the Salon of 1822, produced, as we have seen, a sensation no less great than the *Radeau de la Méduse*. Though it is almost the first that Delacroix painted, it already shows us all his essential characteristics. His genius was one of those rare ones that, at the first essay, find and enter into their kingdom; for him there was no groping for the way, no false start. Though the years necessarily brought him greater command of his instrument and more varied means of expression, all the qualities of his most mature works can be recognised in his earliest. We do not have to trace in him the gradual development of a talent beginning timidly in the footsteps of others, or of one who has to undergo a long apprenticeship

DANTE ET VIRGILE

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before acquiring sufficient mastery to express his own personality. From the first Delacroix was himself, inspired and emboldened by the masters he loved to be potently and unswervingly himself. The picture of *Dante et Virgile* represents a boat rowed by a naked and vigorous oarsman, making its way over deep and gloomy waters towards the horizon, which is illuminated by flames. Two figures are standing in the centre of the boat; the one, dignified and upright in the folds of his toga, his head bound with laurel, his eyes fixed calmly and sadly on the spectacle at his feet, is Virgil. The other we recognise no less easily as Dante; his shuddering gesture and distorted features denote the extremity of horror and terror, while his eyes seem magnetised by the fearful spectacle of the miserable creatures who are struggling in the gloomy waters at his feet, and writhing in convulsions of impotent rage and agony. It seems astonishing to us at the present day that this picture should have provoked so violent a storm of abuse, such are the balance of its parts, its colouring, which is sober if not harmonious, and the sculptural quality of its drawing,

which has the solidity and a little of the hardness of bronze. We must realise afresh the ascendency of David to understand the repugnance of the public to this work, filled as it is with the unholy agitation of the Inferno, the rebellion and the groans of the damned. If the public did not understand the expressive beauty of the *Dante et Virgile*, there were not many painters who understood the freedom and boldness of execution which were so well adapted to the character of the subject. The famous criticism of Delécluze (the critic-in-chief of the Davidians) may be taken as the opinion of the School. "This is not a picture but a regular hash!" * But if Delacroix had to suffer from hostile critics, he was consoled by the appreciation of others more penetrating. From the first, Gros recognised with enthusiasm a kindred spirit, and Delacroix's own words shall tell the emotion which the master's praise caused him :

"I idolised Gros' talent which still, at the moment I write (1865) and after all that I have seen, seems to me one of the most notable

* "*Une véritable tartouillade.*"

in the history of painting. I met Gros by chance, who, learning that I was the author of the picture in question (*Dante et Virgile*), complimented me with such incredible warmth that for the rest of my life I have been insensible to flattery. After having brought out all its merits, he ended by saying it was 'Rubens chastened.' For him who adores Rubens and who had been trained in the severe school of David this was the highest praise." (*Fragment autobiographique: Eugène Delacroix, sa vie et ses œuvres.*)

Thiers, too, at that time a young man writing for the papers, recognised the work of a master, and praised it with an enthusiasm and discernment which are less astonishing when we learn that his article was inspired by Gros.

"It seems to me," wrote he, in a review of the Salon, in *Le Constitutionnel*, "that no picture reveals the future of a great painter better than M. Delacroix's *Dante et Virgile*. Here, in especial, we see an outbreak of talent, a burst of rising superiority which revive the hopes that had been slightly discouraged by

the too moderate merits of all the rest. The artist, besides that poetical imagination which is common to both painter and writer, has, moreover, the artistic imagination, which one might almost call the draughtsman's imagination, and which is quite different from the former. He flings in his figures, groups and bends them to his will with the boldness of Michael Angelo and the fecundity of Rubens. I know not what recollection of the august masters seizes me at the aspect of this picture. I recognise here that fierce power which with all its ardour is yet natural, and is carried along without effort by its own impetus. I think," he adds, "I am not mistaken; M. Delacroix has received genius; let him advance with confidence and devote himself to immense labour, the indispensable condition of talent."

The picture was bought by the Director of the Royal Galleries for 1200 francs (exactly half the sum originally asked by Delacroix) and hung in the Luxembourg. It is now in the Louvre.

CHAPTER III

Delacroix's mental and moral discipline—*Le Massacre de Scio*—The Salon of 1824—Constable and the English painters—Their influence on Delacroix—His visit to England—Representation of *Faust*—Influence of stage on Delacroix

Delacroix's journal for the first half of the year 1824 is largely taken up with introspection. On the threshold of life he trembles at the mystery and uncertainty with which he is surrounded; he ponders on the destiny and weakness of man, he seems to feel the necessity of drawing up for himself a code of conduct, of forcing himself to undergo the strictest mental and moral discipline. Solitude, work, the study of the great masters—these he looks to, to strengthen his soul and make him capable of great things.

"*3rd March.*—Go back to your picture vigorously. Think of Dante, read him again

and again; shake yourself so as to get back great ideas. What profit shall I get from this solitude if I only have vulgar ideas?

"31*st March*.—I must dine little and work in the evening alone. I think going out occasionally into the best society, or even into any society, is less dangerous than frequenting so-called artists. Vulgarity is constantly cropping up in their conversation. One must return to solitude, and live soberly, like Plato. The things one feels alone are stronger, more virgin.

"4*th April*.—Think of the benefit which you will find instead of the void which is incessantly dragging you away from yourself—the benefit of inward satisfaction and a solid memory; think of the sangfroid acquired by a regular life; health that is not shaken by endless concessions to passing excesses necessitated by the society of others; work persevered in; much to do.

"7*th April*.—In what darkness am I plunged? Because of my feeble humanity must a wretched and fragile piece of paper prove the only record of the existence which remains to me? The future is all black. The past equally so. . . .

But my mind and the history of my soul, must it all be annihilated because I refuse to owe what might survive of it to the necessity of writing it down ? On the contrary, the obligation of a little daily duty is a good thing. A single fixed and regular obligation in life makes all the rest of life orderly ; everything gravitates about it. In preserving the history of what I experience, I live doubly ; the past will return to me. The future is always there."

During these months he was hard at work at his picture of the *Massacre de Scio*. His love of the dramatic, his taste for oriental scenery, which had long been nourished by his admiration for Gros and Byron, received a fresh impulse at the moment of the Greek War of Independence. It was in 1822 that he resolved upon choosing an incident of this war as the subject of a picture—in 1823 that he began upon *Le Massacre de Scio*. The pictorial attractiveness of this subject lay in the contrast of gay and brilliant stuffs, glittering harness and gleaming weapons with the pallor of the dead and dying. The idea was not new, for Gros had already treated it in his *Pestiférés de*

Jaffa,* in which Bonaparte, surrounded by his brilliant staff, is represented visiting a plague hospital, and touching with his delicate fingers the pustules of a plague-stricken patient. But Delacroix's handling of it, the masterly superiority of his colouring and expression, give it originality and freshness. A vast sky barred with gold and a wide far-stretching plain, steeped in light and air, swept by gusts of fire and smoke, and alive with burning villages and ravaging troops, form the background to the central group. On a little rearing Arab, covered with crimson trappings and maddened by the fumes of battle, sits a Turk dressed in a gold striped costume at once sombre and glowing, while to the conqueror's saddle is hanging the fair, soft body of a naked woman. The whole of this portion of the picture is rich

* Alexandre Dumas relates in his Memoirs that one day as he was looking at the *Massacre de Scio* he met Delacroix. "I did not know," he remarked to the painter, "that there had been a plague at Scio." "Hush!" exclaimed Delacroix taking him by the arm, "you have hit the right nail on the head. All the others are beside the mark. It was in front of the *Pestiférés de Jaffa* that the first idea of my *Massacre* came to me. *J'ai mal lavé la palette de Gros.* Only you must not say so!"

LE MASSACRE DE SCIO

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and warm in colouring, and is contrasted with the livid tones of the heap of dead and wounded on the left, with an understanding so superb, and a handling so admirable, that a far deeper impression is produced than by the analogous picture of *Les Pestiférés*. But if Delacroix possesses in the highest degree the gift of harmonious colour, his imaginative creation of human expression and gesture has never been surpassed, never, perhaps, been equalled by the greatest of the old masters. The true greatness of the picture lies in its poignant tragedy. Among the ghastly pile of the dead and dying, men and women, old and young, children and babes, we are first struck by the indescribably impressive figure in the centre, of a man in the prime of life, who lies dying, in weakness not in pain, calmly, languidly, a smile on his lips, with glazing, absent eyes that no longer behold the horrors surrounding him. The old woman sitting beside the murdered girl and her baby has the rapt, ecstatic look of a seer of terrible visions, and one of the most touching portions of the picture is the piteous group of two children clinging together as they die. In all this we must note

there are no physical horrors, no weltering in blood, no trace of the sensuality of cruelty. The appeal is made to our souls, and made by an imagination at once so powerful and so restrained, so free from the obvious, the commonplace and the exaggerated, so dramatically and psychologically true, that our hearts are touched by that rare and exquisite emotion which lies beyond the expression of words, and is oftener evoked by the mystery of music than by the more material arts. This, indeed, according to Delacroix, is the true function of painting. "Oh, smile of the dying!" he writes on May 9, "glance of a mother's eye, embraces of despair! Precious domain of painting! Silent power that speaks only to the eyes, and that gains and becomes master of all the faculties of the soul! This is the spirit, this is the true beauty that is yours, oh lovely painting, insulted, misunderstood, handed over to the beasts who exploit you." And again: "The writer says almost everything so as to be understood. In painting, a kind of mysterious bridge is erected between the soul of the people represented and that of the spectator. He sees the shapes of outward nature,

but he thinks inwardly with the true thought which is common to all men, which some embody in words, but only by modifying its intangible essence. Thus coarse minds are more moved by writers than by musicians and painters."

In one of the entries of his diary at this time (January 25, 1824) he gives vent to the exasperation caused him by the visit of friends who think themselves at liberty to find fault with his picture while he is still at work upon it. "What!" he exclaims, "I am obliged to struggle against fortune and my natural indolence, I am obliged to earn my bread with enthusiasm, and wretches like that force themselves into my den, freeze my inspirations in the bud, and take my measure with their spectacles—they who *do not wish to be Rubens!* Merciful heavens, I give thanks that in my wretchedness I still have enough strength to keep at arm's length the hesitations that were often aroused by their foolish remarks. . . . At their departure I relieved my mind by a torrent of imprecations against mediocrity, and then went back into my shell."

The *Massacre de Scio* was exhibited in the Salon of 1824. This exhibition is of particular

interest in the history of art, as it was the means of introducing the works of several eminent English painters to French artists, at the critical moment when faith in the old conventions was dying out, and a new inspiration was being eagerly sought for. The history of the influence of Constable on the great French landscape painters is well known ; but the first Frenchman to feel this influence was, doubtless, Delacroix himself. So struck was he by the sight of Constable's pictures that, though his own work had already been hung, he obtained permission to withdraw *Le Massacre* for a few days, and during this time re-painted it from end to end. So runs the legend, and the distinguished critic, Mr. George Moore, thinks it a sufficient proof of Delacroix's inferiority as a painter, and gives it as a reason for excluding his name from among those who will exercise a prolonged influence on the art of the future, contrasting him with the great masters, the execution of whose work is "always calculated, and its result perfectly predetermined and accurately foreseen." * Had Mr. Moore looked at the picture in ques-

* "Modern Painting," by George Moore.

tion he would have recognised that Constable's influence can be traced only, and that with difficulty, in the somewhat golden colouring of the landscape, buildings and trails of smoke in the background. Lassalle Bordes, a pupil of Delacroix, is nearer to the truth when he relates that the master was dissatisfied with the general tone of the picture, which was too chalky, and that after seeing the English pictures he transformed it in four days by means of violent glazings. In reality, nothing of importance was changed in this large and complicated work: the composition, the figures, the expressions remained untouched; the glazings served only to heighten the tone of the parts which were too colourless.* The accusation of haphazard painting was apparently often directed against Delacroix; Baudelaire replies to it with indignation. "Nothing is more impertinent nor more stupid than to speak of the obligations which a great artist, as erudite and reflective as Delacroix, owes to the god of chance. There is no chance in art any more than in mechanics. . . . This

* Delacroix again re-touched the *Massacre* in 1847, as it was turning yellow.

intervention of chance in Delacroix's painting has less verisimilitude as he is one of those rare men who remain original after having drunk at all the true sources. His unconquerable individuality has successively passed under the yoke of all the great masters and shaken it off." * The *Massacre de Scio* on its first appearance aroused a controversy similar to that which greeted the *Dante et Virgile*. For Delacroix, says Dumas in his Memoirs, "was destined to keep all his life long that rare privilege for an artist, of awakening hatred and admiration with every fresh work." It was of this picture that Gérard declared "a painter has been revealed to us, but he is a man who runs along the house-tops." "Yes," says Baudelaire, "but to run along the house-tops one must have a sure foot, and an eye guided by an inward light." On the whole, however, *Le Massacre* was recognised as a work of promise, notwithstanding its faults, and was bought by the State for 6000 francs. It was at first hung in the Luxembourg, and was subsequently transferred to the Louvre, where it now is.

* *Curiosités Esthétiques*. Salon de 1846.

In the year following the Salon of 1824, Delacroix determined to pay his friend Thales Fielding a visit, and to see for himself the land of Shakespeare and Constable. He always looked back to the months he spent in London as among the pleasantest of his life; but, acquainted as he already was with the works of the chief English painters, the journey brought him little that was fresh from the point of view of his art. Bonington and the Fieldings were his chief companions during his stay in London, where he gave himself up to enjoying the cordial hospitality and "noble politeness of the English"; he made excursions on the river, went riding and yachting, admired the parks and shops, and was shocked at the absence of architecture in the streets. He visited the studios of many distinguished artists, who received him with the greatest kindness. The gracious urbanity of Lawrence is truly that of a "painter of princes," says Delacroix. "His portraits, notwithstanding a tendency to over-imitate the school of Reynolds, are in some respects superior to those of Van Dyck himself. The eyes of Lawrence's women have a sparkle and their half-opened lips a charm that are

inimitable."* When Delacroix exhibited his picture of *Marino Faliero*, Lawrence was greatly struck by it, and contemplated buying it, but was prevented by his death, which occurred about that time. Wilkie also aroused Delacroix's admiration. "One of my most striking recollections," says he, "is that of his sketch for the picture of John Knox preaching before Mary Stuart. I am told the picture was inferior to the sketch."† "His finished pictures I disliked, but his sketches and rough drafts are beyond all praise. Like painters of all ages and all countries, he regularly spoils his finest work."‡ Of Constable, he writes: "Admirable man! he is one of the glories of England. . . . He and Turner are true reformers. They have got out of the rut of the old landscape paintings. Our school has greatly profited by their example." §

But, perhaps, the deepest and most abiding impressions that Delacroix carried away from his stay in London were those left by his visits to the theatre. In the days before the advent

* Letter to Théophile Silvestre, 1858.

† *Ibid.*

‡ Letter to Pierret, 1825.

§ Letter to Théophile Silvestre, 1858

of Hernani, when the numbing traditions of the eighteenth century still kept the French stage in their icy clutch, Delacroix was already prepared by temperament and vocation to feel in the depths and heights of his being the genius of Shakespeare, so kindred to his own, in its tragic passion and complex sensibility. He was fortunate enough to see his works in the most favourable circumstances for impressing his eye and his imagination, with Kean, probably the greatest of all English tragic actors, as their interpreter. His letters are full of enthusiasm for the great actor whom he especially mentions in the parts of Othello, Richard III., and Shylock, while words fail him to express his admiration for the creator of these characters. It was in London too that he saw the performance of an arrangement of *Faust* as an opera-drama, which, even more than Retch's illustrations, suggested to him the idea of his famous lithographs. Pages of his English note-book are covered with sketches of Terry in his "accomplished and satanic" performance of Mephistopheles. There is no doubt that Delacroix's delight in the theatre, which in his youth amounted almost to a

passion, profoundly influenced and modified his art. In many of his pictures there is an element of theatricality which jars upon our taste and offends our eye. It is difficult to define for what reason gestures, groupings and expressions that affect and delight us on the stage, should shock us as false and exaggerated when transposed to the terms of an art which, no less than that of scenic representation, is based on convention and composition. It may probably be explained by the fact that effects upon the stage are necessarily transient, and must be magnified and accentuated in such a manner as to produce an almost instantaneous impression upon the imagination. This method is ill-adapted to the art of painting, which produces works of a more abiding nature, the effect of which is destined to increase in proportion as they are studied, and which demand patient and prolonged examination before yielding up their essential beauty.

CHAPTER IV

Salon of 1827—Classics and Romantics—*Sardanapalus—Marino Faliero*—Violent attacks of critics—Illustrations of *Faust* and *Hamlet—L'Evêque de Liège—Boissy d'Anglas*—The revolution of 1830—Romanticism in art and literature—*Le 28 Juillet*

When the doors of the Salon reopened again at the end of 1827, after an interval of three years, the public were astonished to find how large a number of painters had abandoned the stronghold of Davidism and openly joined the ranks of the enemy. Up till that time the productions of such innovators as Géricault and Delacroix had been more or less isolated examples amidst a multitude of more orthodox works. Their influence, however, though at first unperceived, worked surely and steadily upon the younger generation, and was strikingly apparent in the Salon of 1827–28. Delacroix himself exhibited three large pictures: *Le Bûcher de Sardanapale, Marino*

Faliero, and *Le Christ au Jardin des Oliviers*, besides nine other less important works. The gauntlet was flung down, and war began in deadly earnest between the opposing parties. It was at this time that the terms Romanticism and Romantic came into common use. Their origin is hard to trace, but they were perhaps first applied to Géricault in a newspaper article on his death. Their exact meaning is still more difficult to define. The task has been undertaken by innumerable historians of art and literature, and many philosophical works have been written to show the fundamental and theoretical differences between Classicism and Romanticism, and the causes which give rise to them. We will only attempt here to enumerate some of the more obvious characteristics that distinguish the two schools—at any rate in the current acceptation of the words.

The ideal of the Classic artist is that in his work should reign order, lucidity and sobriety, and that by means of these supreme qualities, and ever guided by the great traditions of the past, he should produce a whole of harmonious proportion and perfect balance, of noble simplicity and dignified restraint.

The Romantic, on the other hand, seeks to play upon our emotions, and stir our inmost being by more varied methods. He makes use of the whole gamut of human experience, and rejects nothing that can increase the intensity of the feelings he wishes to evoke. Violent and fevered expression, the extremes of contrast, triviality on the heels of tragedy, tumult and strangeness, mystery and gloom, the horror of the supernatural, the fascination of the grotesque, all these are permissible means to his end, for he knows no law but his own personality. Now, when the bitterness of the combat has passed, it is easy for us to see the errors into which either side may fall, how the Classic is in danger of becoming frigid, monotonous and lifeless, and how the power of the Romantic may turn to melodramatic bluster, his tumult to unintelligible confusion, his mystery become meaningless, and every effect he wishes to produce be frustrated and lost by the multitude and incongruity of the means he uses. We can also see how some of the greatest masters walk on the border-land and combine the finest qualities of both; how purity of style may go hand in

hand with passion and a complex and original personality find expression in ordered harmony.

Delacroix himself always resented being labelled as a Romantic, and was careful to hold himself aloof from the more exaggerated aims and methods of the school of which he was hailed as chief by both friends and enemies alike. He would only acknowledge that the term might be justly applied to him when used in its widest signification. "If by my Romanticism is meant the free expression of my personal impressions, my aversion from the stereotypes invariably produced in the schools, and my repugnance to academic receipts, then I must admit I am romantic."

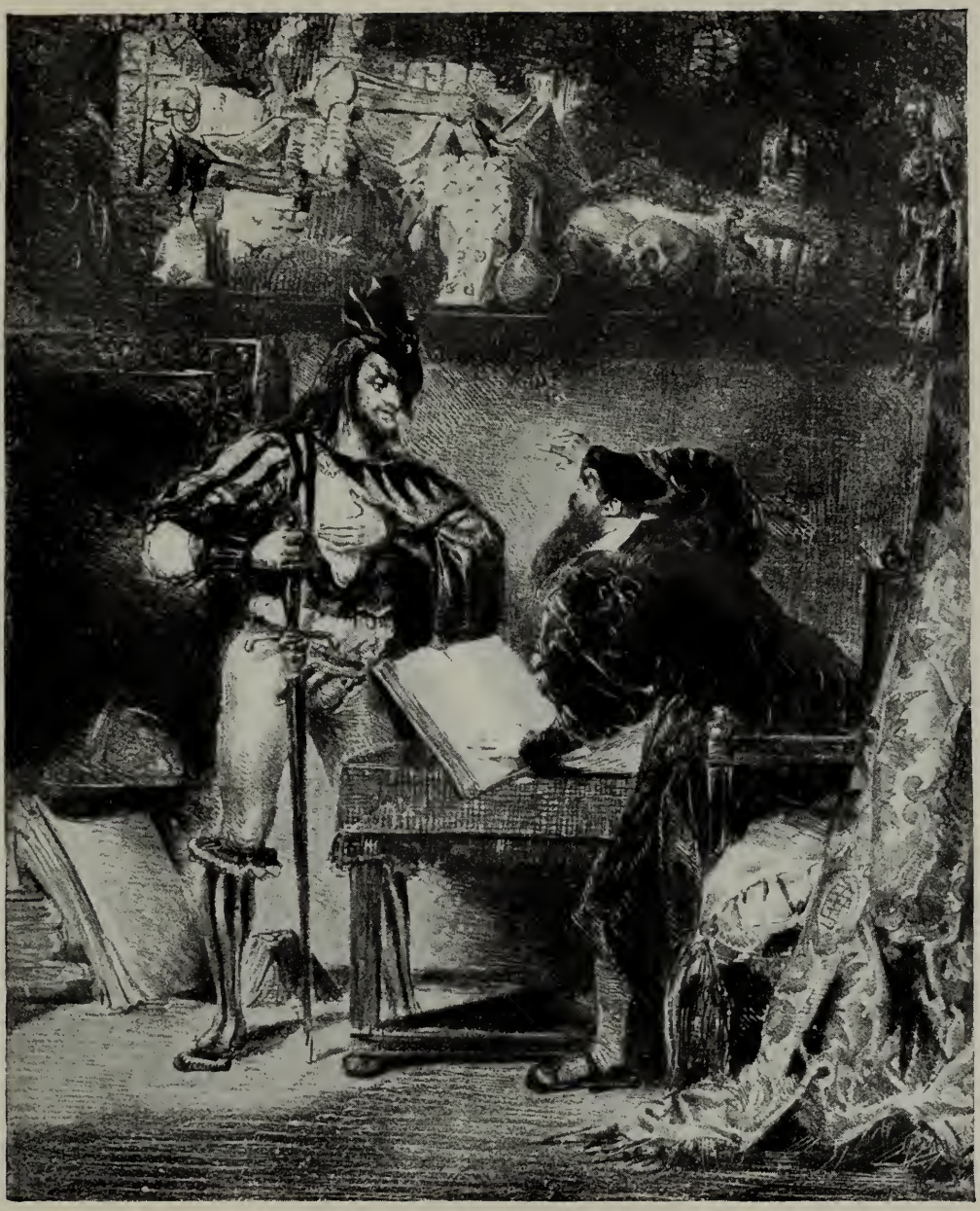
Doubtless, the immense picture of *Sardanapalus* was a striking example of his detestation of the existing school, and it was greeted by critics and public alike as a wild and incoherent daub. The artist's effort to produce a dramatic and pictorial effect by the massing of his lights and shades, the richness and variety of his colouring, the drawing of his nude figures, which, for the first time almost since Rubens, is approached from the painter's and not the sculptor's point of view—all these things were

set down as proofs of incapacity and ignorance. Eyes accustomed only to the lifeless works of the Davidian school were blind to the intensity of expression reached by the impassive figure of the Eastern monarch as he reclines, throned on high, watching with imperturbable serenity the approach of his own fate and the tortured forms of his agonised women.

The picture of *Marino Faliero* met with no better reception. This picture is now in the Wallace Collection at Hertford House, and is the only Delacroix of importance in a public gallery in England. In this charming work Delacroix seems desirous of showing us with what a happy combination of audacity and delicacy he can mingle his colours. The subject of the picture lends itself admirably to this. Nothing can be more tempting to an appreciative eye than the sumptuous costumes of the Doge and Signiors of Venice standing in the inner court of a white marble palace. But Delacroix is never merely a painter of magnificent robes and picturesque surroundings; the dramatic bearing of the scene is always given its full importance. The

strange figure of the executioner has a profile of tragic intensity; the great nobles standing at the head of the marble staircase, motionless and impassive, gaze gravely at the headless corpse, and the agitation of the murmuring populace in the foreground is an admirable device for accentuating the haughty silence that reigns among the avengers. The scene is conceived with insight and rendered with power, but it is by the glowing harmony of its reds and golds, rather than by its expressiveness, that the eye is chiefly held and charmed.

The critics of the Salon unanimously agreed in their violent condemnation of Delacroix's works; "the compositions of a sick man in delirium," "the fanaticism of ugliness," "barbarous execution," "an intoxicated broom," "a drunken savage" (a phrase which had already been applied by Voltaire to Shakespeare)—such are some of the terms of abuse showered upon him; the gentlest among them deplore the talent which here and there can be seen "struggling with the systematic *bizarrerie* and the disordered technique of the artist, just as gleams of reason and sometimes flashes



(*Lithograph*)

MEPH. Why all this uproar? Is there anything
In my poor power to serve you?

Faust

(*Lithograph*)

FAUST. Fair lady, may I offer you my arm;
And will you suffer me to see you home?

Faust

(*Lithograph*)

MEPH. Stick to some one doctor's words;

. . . . .

But stick to words at any rate,
Their magic bids the temple gate
Of certainty fly safely ope.

Faust

(Lithograph)

FAUST. What are the figures near the gibbet doing ?

Faust

(*Lithograph*)

MARG. Woe, woe !
Oh ! that I could escape
These dark thoughts . . .

EVIL SPIRIT. The judgment arrests thee.
The trumpet is sounding . . .
Woe's thee !

CHOIR. Judex ergo cum sedebit,
Quidquid latet adparebit,
Nil inultum remanebit.

Faust

(*Lithograph*)

WAGNER. . . he snarls at strangers,
Barks, lies upon his belly, wags his tail . . .

Faust

of genius may be seen lamentably shining through the speech of a madman." There can be no doubt that Delacroix felt these attacks bitterly. "They will end by persuading me that I have made a veritable fiasco,"* he writes to Soulier, "that it is an absolute failure, and that the death of Sardanapalus is the death of the Romantics—since romantics there are." The final touch was given to his disgust when M. Sosthène de la Rochefoucauld, at that time Directeur des Beaux Arts, sent for Delacroix and recommended him to study drawing from casts, warning him that unless he could change his style in the future, he must expect neither commissions nor recognition from the State. This interview put an end for the time being to all Delacroix's hopes of official encouragement, such as would give him opportunities for the great undertakings for which he felt himself supremely fitted. "You may judge what such enforced idleness meant for me (not to mention the money question) at a moment when I felt myself capable of covering a whole town with my paintings. Not that my ardour was

* Letter to Soulier, March 11, 1828.

chilled, but a great deal of time, and that the most precious, was lost in little things."*

For some time after this disastrous Salon, Delacroix therefore had to confine himself to smaller works. It was in 1828 that he published his series of lithographs of Faust, which Goethe declared surpassed the images he had himself conceived while composing the work. Eckermann reports with what delight Goethe recognised the embodiment of his own creations and admired the mastery and comprehension by which these drawings become not mere illustrations but an illuminating commentary of the poem. Delacroix's Mephistopheles is indeed a worthy rendering of that insidious and seductive fiend. Whether we see him, slim and elegant, as he accompanies Faust and Marguerite at their first meeting, his sword cocked, his cloak flung over his shoulder, a wicked smile on his lips, his evil eyes scrutinising the dark places of the street, or whether again he is represented disguised as Faust, and giving perfidious advice to the young student who comes with trembling respect to consult the worthy philosopher,

* Autobiographical fragment.

whether we see him calm and contemptuous amidst the brutal drunkards in Auerbach's cellar, or unconcerned during the horrors of the gruesome midnight ride, the sinister wit and malice of his strange countenance are noted with incomparable skill. In these lithographs, as in his large pictures, it is remarkable with what art Delacroix makes the eyes and gestures of his characters communicate; it is rare to find a painter who possesses to such a degree the power of putting the objects and persons in his pictures into contact with each other; he makes of his picture one complete whole, from which it is impossible to detach any portion; his figures strike the eye simultaneously and no detail is allowed to interfere with the general effect.

We may here mention also his lithographs illustrating *Hamlet*, though these were not executed till later (1835). "Delacroix," says Théophile Gautier, "probed to their utmost depths the hidden mystery of the works whence he drew his subjects. He assimilated the types he portrayed, made them live with his life, infused into them his heart's blood, communicated to them the vibration of his nerves,

and re-created them afresh, while still preserving their characteristics." *Hamlet* was always a favourite subject with Delacroix, and he drew from it innumerable easel-pictures as well as this series of lithographs. "No one," says George Sand in a letter to Théophile Silvestre, "no one has felt more than he the pain and pathos of Hamlet. No more poetic light has ever been shed round this hero of doubt and irony, who yet before his ecstasy was the 'glass of fashion and the mould of form.' Some disappointed enthusiasts have remarked with surprise the contrast between Delacroix the creator and Delacroix the illustrator, between the fiery colourist and the delicate critic, between the admirer of Rubens and the worshipper of Raphael. But Delacroix is more powerful and more fortunate than those who cry down one of these great men in order to exalt the other; he is able, with the manifold sides of his intelligence, to enjoy equally the diverse faces of Beauty."

In 1829 Delacroix executed a small picture, *L'Assassinat de l'Evêque de Liège*, for the Duke of Orleans, whose advent to the throne as

THE DEATH OF OPHELIA

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LE 28 JUILLET (1830), OU

LA LIBERTÉ CONDUISANT LE PEUPLE AUX BARRICADES

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Louis Philippe, in the following year, brought about a change in the artist's circumstances which, without compelling the admiration that was his due, nevertheless ensured him the protection of the State, and enabled him to devote himself henceforth to those great undertakings for which he thirsted. In *L'Evêque de Liège*, the illustration of a scene in Scott's "Quentin Durward," and also in the later work of *Boissy d'Anglas* (1831), Delacroix seems to have been influenced by the unfinished pictures of Wilkie's which he had so much admired during his visit to London; he has, at any rate, profited by the remark that he made on this occasion, that the English painter's works were invariably spoilt by being too much finished. It was here, no doubt, that he learnt, in painting crowds, not to terminate each individual figure separately, but to treat them in large masses without lingering over details. By this means he has obtained in these two works a wonderful impression of the tumultuous and surging throngs of an excited crowd, and at the same time has preserved the charm of the "first fine careless rapture" which, by its very want of precision,

imparts so much mystery, freshness and life to a work of art.

The year 1830 has given its name to that brilliant generation of poets, novelists, painters and philosophers which, as Théophile Gautier says with just pride, "will make its mark on the future and be spoken of as one of the climacteric epochs of the human mind." The revolution of July, the famous first night of Hernani, and, no doubt, the convenience of a round number are probably the reasons that led to the popular appellation. We have seen, however, that in art the new ideals, which are commonly supposed to have been inaugurated in 1830, had in reality been in the air for many years past. The same is, undoubtedly, true of literature, though the battle that raged round the production of Hernani first awoke public attention to the fact that a new and noisy generation was knocking at the doors. The relationship which exists between the literature and art of this period is, indeed, very close. The terms Romantic and Romanticism, which had been first used to characterise the new school of painters, were soon recognised to be equally applicable to literature,

where a similar movement was making itself felt in the drama, in lyric poetry and in novel writing. The same sources of inspiration and the same environment produced among painters and poets similar ideals and works that had much in common. A passionate desire for personal expression, revolt against authority and tradition, these were the principles for which Byron lived and died, and, dying, bequeathed as an inspiring force to the great lyric poets of 1830. We have seen how these principles animated the works of the Romantic painters. To Byron, too, we may trace that fascination of the East which, with its splendours and cruelties, exercised so potent a charm over the imaginations of Romantic poets and painters alike. No less seductive was the past. Scott had called up to his delighted contemporaries brilliant visions of the days of chivalry, with their clash of arms, their gay costumes, their picturesque and stirring pageantry and the dark and gloomy terrors that underlay them. The spell of the Middle Ages was easily cast over the generation of French Romantics. The whole outlook over the past became tinged by the prevailing

taste for vivid colour and dramatic contrast, and we owe to it Michelet's *History*, no less than *Notre Dame de Paris* and *Les Croisés à Constantinople*. The eyes that turned to nature also sought her in her most romantic mood, and chiefly as a background, or as an illustration of the passions of man; grim mountains, ancient ruins, blasted heaths and storm-tossed seas are the scenes which especially appealed to the writers and painters of the time. In all these points Delacroix is probably the completest and most characteristic exponent of the Romanticism of 1830. It is natural that he should have been constantly compared to that other great Romantic who towered over his contemporaries and translated into words as Delacroix into pictures the passions and ideals of his age. Victor Hugo, however, and Delacroix were each of them too dominant a personality to appreciate the other. Hugo preferred intellects and characters that would bow before his own and bestowed the post of painter-in-ordinary to the Romantics on Louis Boulanger, on whom he and his friends showered the most lavish praises. Delacroix stood somewhat haughtily aloof.

(Lithograph)

GHOST. I am thy father's spirit . . .
Revenge his foul and most unnatural murder.

Hamlet, act i. sc. v.

(*Lithograph*)

HAMLET. My fate cries out . . .
Still am I called. Unhand me, gentlemen,
By heaven! I'll make a ghost of him that lets me.

Hamlet, act i. sc. v.

(*Lithograph*)

POLONIUS. What do you read, my lord?

Hamlet, act ii. sc. ii.

(*Lithograph*)

HAMLET. Get thee to a nunnery.

Hamlet, act iii, sc. i.

(*Lithograph*)

Young Clifford finding his father's body on the battlefield of St. Albans

Henry VI. part ii. act v. sc. ii.

His literary sympathies were all with the great classics of the past. Racine seemed to him infinitely greater than Hugo, Balzac and Musset, and though he was on terms of respectful friendship with George Sand, it was rather as a friend and personality that he admired her than as a writer. His predilection for the soberer and more restrained forms of art was strongly marked in music also. Berlioz he condemned unsparingly. And even while he admits Beethoven's supreme genius, we feel that he remains unmoved and uncomprehending, and that all his instinctive sympathy and affection go to Glück and Mozart. These are the tastes that made him object so strongly to being labelled as a Romantic, and they go to prove that though Delacroix was indeed the exponent of the spirit of his age, and was swayed by its strongest currents, yet the deepest instincts of his soul inclined towards order, discipline and restraint. His extraordinary and never-failing preoccupation with the technical side of painting is another proof of these instincts, and shows how far removed he was from those of his contemporaries who thought that the soul in art could be

independent of form, and should be unshackled by any fetters.

The revolution of July, stimulating as it was to so many great minds of the day, inspired Delacroix with one of his most interesting pictures. *Le 28 Juillet*, or *La Liberté conduisant le peuple sur les barricades*, is the only one of Delacroix's works in which he represents modern life, and is a striking refutation of those people who complain that modern costume is too ugly and prosaic to be treated in painting. We cannot help wishing, indeed, that he had given us other and completer works of the same character. "That man," says Baudelaire, "is the true painter who is able to extract from modern and everyday life its epic side, and to show and teach us by means of colour and drawing how great and poetical we are in our cravats and polished boots." . . . "Every old painter has been modern in his day. The greater number of the fine portraits of former times are dressed in the costume of their period. They are perfectly harmonious, because the costumes, the hair, and even the attitude, look and smile (each period has its own bearing, look and smile),

form a whole of complete vitality."* *Le 28 Juillet* gives us the very breath and spirit of modern street-fighting. In the background, through a haze of smoke and fire, we see the buildings of Paris; heaps of paving-stones, torn up from the streets, form the barricade in the foreground where the citizens of Paris are flinging themselves forward to meet the soldiers of the king, in the fierceness of a combat, in which Liberty herself is the leader and the prize. The artist has no opportunity here of dazzling us with the display of damascened arms and richly-coloured costumes. Instead of turbans we have a top hat, instead of picturesque and flowing drapery, the austere lines of a black frock-coat! And only here and there glimpses of a red epaulette, a gleaming helmet or breast-plate relieve and accentuate the sombre tonality of the whole. The dramatic effect is all the more intense and human. We cannot help regretting the allegorical figure of Liberty, which jars in spirit with the rest of the picture, and is inferior in workmanship. Her draperies are heavy, the tricolour flag she is waving looks cut out

* *Curiosités Esthétiques.* Charles Baudelaire.

of iron, and though her firm bronzed bosom is finely painted, it hardly redeems the expressionless head. The figure of the bourgeois of 1830, on the other hand, is magnificent. His tall hat pressed down over one ear, he holds a heavy musket convulsively grasped in his hands ; his face is marked with stern and feverish energy. This is one of Delacroix's finest creations, the truest, the most sincere, the least literary. We know already the power he possessed of depicting the looks and gestures of the dying ; the expression of the soldier in the foreground as he lies expiring with open mouth and slowly shutting eyes is poignant in its pathos ; and the dead body of the young man who, dressed merely in his shirt, lies with his poor naked legs stiff and uncovered is profoundly touching. We admire, once more, the simplicity of the methods by which the artist creates so deep an impression. *L'Evêque de Liège* and *Le 28 Juillet* were exhibited in the Salon of 1831, and though the public remained hostile and the Jury bestowed none of its numerous prizes on Delacroix, the Government acknowledged its appreciation of his talent and politics by making him Chevalier of the Legion of

Honour. A more important favour enabled him in the following year to gratify one of his dearest wishes, and proved of paramount importance in his artistic development.

CHAPTER V

Journey to Morocco—Its influence on Delacroix's art—*Les Femmes d'Alger*—Delacroix begins his great decorations—Hemicycle of Orpheus in the library of the Chamber of Deputies—Ceiling of the Galerie d'Apollon at the Louvre—Chapel of St. Sulpice—Delacroix as decorator

The painter of the *Massacre de Scio* had long ardently desired to visit the East, and the wished-for opportunity came in the beginning of 1832; in that year Delacroix was attached to the French mission, which accompanied the Count de Mornay, as special ambassador to the Emperor of Morocco. This journey remained in Delacroix's recollection as one of the great events of his life, and, as we shall see, had an immense influence on his art. "The aspect of this country will remain for ever in my eyes," says he; "all my life long the men of this noble race will live and move in my memory; it is they who have really

brought back to me the beauty of the ancients."* During the three months that the expedition lasted he filled his note-books with drawings and notes of architecture, costumes, faces, and effects of light, shade and colour. He was presented, with the rest of the mission, to the Emperor, and during the few minutes that the presentation lasted his searching glance took in every detail with astonishing accuracy. Nothing escaped him of the scene; he notes the sultan's countenance, his yellow heelless slippers, the pink-and-gold saddle, the trappings and clipped mane of the grey horse, even the plain wooden handle of the parasol. His capacity for rapid observation and his prodigious memory were of the utmost service to him, for he encountered great difficulties in drawing in a country of Mahomedans, whose religion forbids the representation of any living creature. Nevertheless, with the help of a few silver coins, he was able to persuade some of the women of the country, chiefly Jewesses, to sit to him. The memories and documents he brought back from this journey enabled him henceforth to depict

* *Les Artistes Vivants.* Théophile Silvestre.

oriental scenes with an accent of truth hitherto unknown, for, as Gautier says, Delacroix was the discoverer of Africa, from a picturesque point of view. When he made the journey, Decamps had not returned from his caravan expedition, and Marilhat had not started. But the influence of the East was not confined only to his pictures of oriental scenes such as *Les Femmes d'Alger*, *La Noce Juive au Maroc*, *Les Convulsionnaires de Tanger*, *Le Sultan Abd-ehr-Rhaman*, &c ; it made itself felt in all his large compositions, whatever their subject ; a new scheme of colour, a new light, henceforth pervade them. Before his visit to Morocco Delacroix was under the influence of Rubens, of Veronese, of Gros, and of the modern painters of the English school. The *Massacre de Scio* not only resembles the *Pestiférés de Jaffa* in its general expression, but also in its colouring, for though Delacroix's colour is subtler and finer, it is, undoubtedly, inspired by Gros. In *Marino Faliero* the yellow robes of the magnificoes are of the same type as Rubens' yellows, while the white satins and the touches of red and green recall Veronese. *Sardanapalus* and *L'Evêque de Liège* were conceived

LA NOCE JUIVE

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FEMMES D'ALGER

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when Delacroix was under the influence of the English, and are reminiscent of their methods. On his return from Morocco a change comes over his colouring, and new shades and tones appear in his works. If we examine the *Femmes d'Alger*, one of his most characteristic pictures from the point of view of light and colouring, we see at a glance that the general effect is fresher and more delicate than formerly. Instead of the gold and amber light of his earlier pictures with their red, brown and bituminous shadows, we have an atmosphère of pearly-grey, which gives harmony and accent to the notes of pure, rich colour. That orange handkerchief owes nothing to Rubens; that tender and charming pink, which is set off by the pure black beside it, cannot be found in any of the old masters; the fresh white of the chemisette is very different from the creamy whites he had been in the habit of using. The frank and simple execution of this picture, the brilliancy, and above all, the harmony of its somewhat resonant tones, struck and captivated Manet at a decisive moment of his career, and through him exercised an incalculable influence over modern

French art. There can be no doubt that it was *Les Femmes d'Alger* that induced Manet to discard the brown, red tones, further mellowed by the use of glazes and prepared oils, which we see in the *Buveur d'Absinthe*, in order to lay on his paint directly and clearly, in a generous and succulent *impasto*, and treat his scheme of colour as a real colourist. In Manet's *Olympia* the influence of *Les Femmes d'Alger* is so apparent that it amounts almost to imitation ; the whites and pale pinks, and even the brown tone of the negress, who appears in both pictures, are identical.

Thus Delacroix brought back from Morocco a memory stored with sparkling visions and vivid sensations, and eyes that had absorbed the dazzling light and radiant colour of the East. He brought back, moreover, a mind that had gained its complete freedom, and had shaken off the last traces of dependence on the masters. During those months in which he had been living in the midst of surroundings that were a constant enchantment, he had had time to forget galleries and exhibitions ; it was here, no doubt, that he learnt the lesson that he must turn to nature for inspiration,

and ask henceforth no other guidance than hers. *Les Femmes d'Alger* was exhibited in the Salon of 1834, which contained also *La Bataille de Nancy*, that admirable impression of battle in the gloom of a snowy winter's day, and *Melmoth* or *L'Amende Honorable*. The scene of this last work, which represents the interior of a convent, was suggested to Delacroix by the architecture of the Palais de Justice at Rouen. "What a man! What a man!" cried Corot, as, passing one day through the building, the memory of this picture of his great contemporary's, flashed across him.

Shortly after his return from Morocco Delacroix started his series of great decorations, at which he continued to work till the end of his life, and which absorbed for the future the greater part of his time and energies. It was owing to the influence of Thiers that in 1833 he received an order to decorate the Salon du Roi, at the Palais Bourbon or Chamber of Deputies. Before this work was finished, in 1837 he received the still more important commission for the decoration of the libraries of the Chamber of Deputies and of the Senate, in the Luxembourg Palace. His other most

important decorations were for the Hôtel de Ville, destroyed by fire in 1871, the ceiling of the Galerie d'Apollon in the Louvre, the Chapel of the Saints Anges in the Church of St. Sulpice, and a wall in the Church of St. Denis.

Delacroix spent about fourteen years of his life on the decorations of the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate. (Salon du Roi, 1833–1838; Libraries, 1838–1847.) It would take too long to analyse in detail this immense work; the vast historical and mythological scenes crowded with characters, the innumerable series of allegorical figures, the wealth of ornament and detail all testify to the fertility of the artist's invention, to his indefatigable energy, and to the range of his technical skill. The physical difficulties he had to contend with were, however, so great that Delacroix with his delicate health found himself unable to cope with them alone. He therefore employed several pupils, and in especial one Lassalle Bordes, to help him. Lassalle Bordes afterwards wrote a short account of his connection with the great painter. He explains that Delacroix prepared the work in his studio, and left it to his pupils to execute *in situ*. The heat of

the atmosphere in the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate was such that it was impossible for any one to work in them for more than four hours a day, and Lassalle Bordes declares that he and two other pupils spent seven years labouring at decorations which Delacroix touched up in two months. It is quite possible that Lassalle Bordes, a vain and egotistical person, who afterwards quarrelled with his master, may have exaggerated the importance of his collaboration, but we cannot help believing that his claims are unfortunately founded on fact. It is true that it requires a painter of almost superhuman genius to overcome our natural repugnance to looking at a ceiling, and that the lighting, as is usual in great building, is ill-adapted to works of art ; but in our opinion the execution of these decorations is so inferior, and their colour so poor and dull, that the interest of the compositions is for the most part lost. It is highly probable that if Delacroix had been able to put more of his actual handiwork into them, he would have compelled a heartier admiration. The most successful of these paintings, and the only one we will discuss here, is the hemicycle in the

Chamber of Deputies, illustrating *Orpheus coming to civilise the Greeks and teach them the arts of peace*. The sky, with its white and airy clouds, the lake and mountains touched by a delicate green light, the delicious softness of the background against which the pronounced colouring of the flesh tones stand out as in certain Pompeian frescos, the harmonious grouping of the figures in the centre and wings, the superb dead lioness and heron in the foreground, form a melodious composition stamped with calm and simple dignity. It was this work which, no doubt, later on helped to inspire Puvis de Chavannes in his antique visions.

When we come to compare the decorations in the Louvre and St. Sulpice with those of the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate, we regret still more deeply Lassalle Bordes' share in the latter. The magnificent ceiling in the Galerie d'Apollon at the Louvre, *Apollo vanquishing the serpent Python* (finished in 1851), was entirely painted by Delacroix in his studio, and its execution is without question incomparably superior to the decorations we have just mentioned. It is a gorgeous and

brilliant piece of work, and is admirably adapted to the great gallery designed by Le Brun, to do homage to Le Roi Soleil. In the centre of a radiant sky, the sun-god, Apollo, standing in his gleaming chariot, wages war with the creatures of darkness. An immense serpent rolls its mighty coils through the sea ; on land, savage wild beasts and frightful monsters fall stricken by the Pythian's darts ; ghastly corpses are strewn on the dark mountain sides, while in the air and on the water float goddesses and nymphs, whose fair limbs form a delicious contrast to the livid shadows and horrible sights that surround them. These strange and diverse elements are blended together with a richness, power and splendour that make of this decoration one of the finest that exist.

The decorations of the Hôtel de Ville over which he spent four years, from 1849 to 1853, are lost to us, but those in the Church of St. Sulpice are among his most interesting works. The decoration of the whole Chapel of the Saints Anges, consisting of two walls and a ceiling, was entrusted to him in 1849, and he worked at it, with constant interruptions,

from 1853 to 1861. It is his last painting of importance, and though Delacroix had to contend with great material difficulties as well as with increasing ill-health, it, nevertheless, shows the master's qualities in undiminished vigour. Each portion of the chapel illustrates the victorious power of divine and supernatural beings directed against mortal adversaries. On the right-hand wall is represented *Heliodorus being driven from the temple.* The composition resembles that of the *Croisés*, which it recalls by a certain air of majesty, and by the grave and sumptuous quality of its colouring. The angelic warrior on horseback is a superb figure of youthful strength and dignity, and the horse itself has a character of antique and noble beauty. The two angels are scourging the malefactor with a fury which is truly demoniac ; the sweep of their wings and the rush of their onset has set the heavy curtains swaying and the spectators flying, and has filled the temple with rumour and agitation. The painting on the opposite wall illustrates *Jacob wrestling with the angel.* Jacob has laid aside his cloak and shield ; the muscles of his vigorous back and arms are strained to bursting

JACOB WRESTLING WITH THE ANGEL

Chapel of the Saints Anges, St. Sulpice

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with the violence of his unavailing effort, as he hurls himself like a wild bull, with lowered head, against the irresistible strength of his divine antagonist. In the background, between the rocks and trees there winds into the distance a white and gleaming caravan, such as Delacroix may have seen in Morocco, in the shimmering light of an Eastern sun.

When we consider Delacroix's general conception of the art of decoration, we find that it was different from that of the ancients and the early Italians, whose principle it was to adapt their decorations to the building for which they were designed, without changing its architectural character. Figures were at that time treated in the same spirit as ornaments, and were sometimes allied with geometrical patterns; the backgrounds against which they were placed were often either perfectly plain, or else an arrangement of conventional leaves, or else a highly simplified landscape without any aerial perspective. Colour was equally conventional. All its architectural value was left to the wall, which remained really a wall in spite of the decorations. Modern painters, on the other hand,

by giving the illusion of reality to their representations of sky, landscape and distance, *abolish* the wall. Delacroix in this followed the Venetians and Rubens. By temperament he preferred the style of painting which gives the sense of distance, and works by strongly marked reliefs and modelling. Some of his decorations, indeed, as, for instance, the two pictures of *St. Sulpice* and the touching *Pietà of St. Denis*, are so little decorations in the usual sense of the word that they could be transferred from their actual positions and placed in a gallery without suffering from their change of locality.

Delacroix notes in his Journal, on one occasion, that he has been reading Edgar Poe's Tales. It was Baudelaire's translation that Delacroix read, and in his Preface to the book Baudelaire says: "Like our Eugène Delacroix, who has lifted his art to the heights of great poetry, Edgar Poe places his characters against green and purple backgrounds where are revealed the phosphorescence of decay and the exhalation of the storm." "Baudelaire is right," comments Delacroix, "in saying that my painting recalls a strange and ideal

sentiment which takes pleasure in the terrible. But," he goes on, " I think *I was turned aside from this sense of the mysterious, which formerly preoccupied me more in my painting, by my mural decorations and allegorical subjects.*" We, too, are of opinion that that peculiar quality which is, perhaps, Delacroix's greatest and most personal contribution to art; that sense of transcending emotion, be it fear, anger, grief or pity, is not present in Delacroix's decorations properly so-called. The Apollo ceiling, great as it is, lacks it; and paintings such as the *Heliodorus* or the *Pietà of St. Denis*, where this emotion can be felt, are, as we have seen, hardly so much decorations as pictures.

CHAPTER VI

Number and variety of Delacroix's minor works—*La Barque de Don Juan*—*La Justice de Trajan*—*Les Croisés à Constantinople*—Exhibition of 1855—Salon of 1859—*Ovide chez les Scythes*—Last years—Champrosay—Habits—Social relations—Increasing ill-health and solitude—Death—Posthumous sale

The number of smaller pictures Delacroix found time to paint, in spite of the importance of his decorative undertakings, is astonishing.* With extraordinary versatility he turned his hand to every kind of medium: oils, water-colours, pastels, and lithography, and to an enormous variety of subjects. Oriental scenes, denoted by such titles as *Fantasia Arabe*, *Rencontre de cavaliers Maures*, *Juives dans leur Intérieur*, led up to his famous picture of *Les Femmes d'Alger dans leur appartement*,

* The Catalogue Robaut catalogues in all 9140 works, comprising 853 oil-paintings, 1525 pastels, water-colours and washes, 24 engravings, 109 lithographs, and more than 60 albums.

LIONESS

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LION AND HARE

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which we have already mentioned; scenes from Dante, Shakespeare, Goethe and Scott are constantly recurring under his brush; still life, flowers and animals attracted him no less. He constantly used to go to the Jardin des Plantes, where at one period he studied wild beasts in company with the famous sculptor, Barye. "He is the true painter who knows the whole of Nature," says Delacroix, in his Journal, and certainly his great range and excellence in every style of painting come from the thoroughness with which he studied all he saw. The names of a few of his more important works may be mentioned: *Le Prisonnier de Chillon* (1834), painted for the Duke of Orleans; a *St. Sebastian* for the Church of Nantua (1836); *La Bataille de Taillebourg* (1837), a large canvas for the historical galleries of Versailles; *Les Convulsionnaires de Tanger* (1838); a *Médée Furieuse* (1838), now in the Lille Gallery; and *La Noce Juive au Maroc* (1839), in the Louvre. We will, however, stop to speak more particularly of three works produced in the prolific years of 1840 and 1841 —three masterpieces which exhibit his genius in its most striking aspects, *La Barque de Don*

Juan (1840), in the Louvre; *La Justice de Trajan* (1840), in the Rouen Gallery; and *Les Croisés à Constantinople* (1841), in the Louvre.

La Barque de Don Juan or *Le Naufrage*, as it is also called, is suggested, rather than inspired, by Byron's poem. It is a drama of the sea, dark and terrible. A drifting boat, with neither mast, nor oar, nor rudder, and a few dying wretches, who are drawing lots as to which one of them shall be first eaten by the others—such is the subject. Beneath a phosphorescent sky, charged with electricity, on a green and glaucous sea, Delacroix has painted the tragic boat-load of despair and resignation, anger and indifference, hope and fear; throughout it all runs a shudder of ghastly terror, a sickly odour of decomposition. The sombre and livid colouring forms a funereal accompaniment of supreme eloquence to a scene which is worthy to be placed beside the most moving creations of art, beside Poussin's *Deluge*, and Rembrandt's *Good Samaritan*, beside all those works whose power to touch us is so great that we are oblivious in what material they are wrought—music, colour, marble.

La Justice de Trajan is in another mood

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LA JUSTICE DE TRAJAN

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L'ENTREE DES CROISÉS À CONSTANTINOPLE

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Here we have a glorification of light; the canvas is flooded with light, light that gleams in the arms and trophies, that vibrates in the glowing colour of the costumes and waving standards, light that picks out the details of the architecture and penetrates beneath the broad arches, light that enriches and enhances and fuses into a harmonious mass the most diverse and the most brilliant elements.

The great picture of *Les Croisés à Constantinople*, painted by command for the historical galleries at Versailles, is the most magnificent and the most complete example of Delacroix's genius. The qualities of the two former works, the expressiveness of the *Barque de Don Juan* and the sumptuous colouring of *La Justice de Trajan*, are here combined, strengthened and chastened. When we compare this work with his earlier oriental scenes, such as *Le Massacre de Scio*, we are struck by his evolution towards a purer and nobler style. Though the *Massacre* was painted before his visit to the East, and *Les Croisés* after, Delacroix's orientalism has changed its topical character; we have no more curved scimitars and bronzed, moustachioed faces; no

more turbans and little Arab horses ; no more of those picturesque details in which he had delighted in his youth : instead of these, he brings us a wider, clearer vision and harmonies unused before. The Orient for him is henceforth light and colour ; and we feel it in all his later pictures. Here, in *Les Croisés*, our eyes dwell with joy on white cities, and seas the colour of faded turquoise, on milky clouds in the pure ultramarine of the sky, on robes that are crimson and violet and emerald and yellow, on standards that glow with the hue of ripe oranges, on green columns, and on flesh that gleams iridescent in the greyness of the shadows. Such decorative effect, such perfect orchestration of colours is worthy to be ranked with the richest and rarest of Persian carpets. Perhaps the scene itself is theatrical in its presentation, perhaps the drawing of the horses' legs wants firmness, but all faults are speedily forgotten : as we look, our minds grow conscious of the finely ordered composition, of the just and harmonious balance of the parts, of the flowing rhythm of the lines ; as we look, truth of gesture and poignancy of expression go home to our hearts

and wring them. The Crusaders are entering Constantinople. In the distance the white town lies stretched on the curved shores of the Golden Horn; trails of smoke float in front of buildings and terraces, and blood is being shed in the streets. In the foreground dead women lie fallen on the marble pavements amid scattered treasures; here, a grave and noble old man implores mercy for his daughter and her child; there, another strikes a man-at-arms with his empty hands. In the centre of the picture and shadowed by a pillared building, a warrior on horseback, attended by his mounted escort, has stopped and looks down with a mild and melancholy glance on the victims at his feet. He has come, not in triumph, not in glory, not unmindful of his divine mission, of his ardent and tender faith. His very horse, with its great, gentle, wondering eyes, seems to pity the unhappy beings among whom it treads, as it sniffs at them with warm breath and lowered head. It is a noble group, pregnant with poetry and instinct with life.

It is worth noting here that Delacroix's horses and other animals take part in the scene not only from a pictorial point of view, but

with all the passion of their beings. They seem to feel pity, like the horse of the Crusader, the love of danger and action like the little Arab in the *Massacre de Scio*, to be divinely majestic like the angel's horse in *Heliodorus*, or terrible, like the lion that rushes to defend the prophet in the picture of *Daniel in the Lion's Den.*

After *Les Croisés* Delacroix appears to have become more and more taken up by his decorative work, and to have produced fewer pictures of importance. Amongst others we may quote *The Sultan of Morocco and his Guard* (painted in 1845, now in the Toulouse picture gallery), a picture which called forth the most eloquent praise from Baudelaire; *L'Enlèvement de Rebecca* (1846); *Mise au tombeau* (1846), ranked by Delacroix himself among his best works; *Daniel dans la fosse aux lions* (1849), now in the Montpellier picture gallery; *St. Stephen* (1853), in the Arras picture gallery; a large *Lion Hunt* (1854), in the Bordeaux Gallery; *Les deux Foscari* (1855). In this same year of 1855 Delacroix exhibited at the great Exhibition of Paris a magnificent series of thirty-five pictures, painted during the

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DANIEL IN THE LION'S DEN

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course of his lifetime, a selection from the best work of thirty years. The effect of this imposing collection was immense, and Delacroix enjoyed the first and only triumph of his life, a triumph none the less great because his life-long rival, Ingres, also took the opportunity of exhibiting a selection of his works in the same building. But in spite of the success of the exhibition of 1855, in spite of a great, one might almost say a world-wide, reputation, in spite of the fact that (after repeated endeavours, it is true) he had been elected academician in 1857, the public remained incorrigible. His pictures in the Salon of 1859 once more called forth one of those storms of abuse that Delacroix had the gift of arousing. Weary and disheartened—"All my life long, I have been *livré aux bêtes*," was his bitter exclamation—he vowed to exhibit no more, and kept his word. And yet, in the Salon of 1859, appeared one of his most charming works—*Ovide chez les Scythes*—a subject which he had already treated in the Library of the Chamber of Deputies. An air of grave and gentle melancholy breathes in this picture, which represents the exiled poet among a

group of rustics who are bringing him country gifts of milk and fruit. It is one of the rare works that show us the master in a mood of tender serenity rather than of strife.

Thus we reach the last years of Delacroix's life. The decoration of St. Sulpice occupied him till 1861, and, owing to increasing ill-health, he accomplished little more before the end in 1863. There are few events to record in his private life; absorbed by his work, he found little time for anything else; once a short journey to Antwerp and Brussels to see the works of Rubens; now and then a visit to relations at Valmont, to George Sand at Nohant, to the great lawyer Berryer at Angerville. The longed-for journey to Italy, often planned, was always deferred; he never saw the great Italian masters in their own country. The brief holidays he allowed himself were generally spent in a little country house at Champrosay, near Paris, where he had a few kind friends in the neighbourhood, but where he went chiefly for rest and solitude. Innumerable passages in his diary show how intimately he was touched by the sights and sounds of Nature and what power she had to move

and charm and tranquillise him. Pages of his sketch-books are filled with patient and loving studies of skies and trees and leaves. But he was chained to Paris and to his giant's work there; his energy was indefatigable, his courage indomitable; rising early, going to bed late, eating hardly at all, he worked strenuously, fiercely; his soul seemed to have caught the fever glow that burnt in the veins of his frail body and set its nerves quivering. "His studio, the temperature of which was equatorial, struck one first of all by its sobriety, solemnity and austerity. No rusty trophies and eastern weapons, no gothic antiques, no jewelry, no frippery, no bric-à-brac. A marvellous portrait by Jordaens and a few studies and copies by the master himself sufficed for the decoration of this vast and tranquil retreat. After a meal more frugal than an Arab's, he would compose his palette with the minute care of a flower-girl or window-dresser arranging their wares, and set himself to take up his interrupted idea, but before plunging into his tempestuous work he often experienced those languors and reluctances and agitations that recall the Pythoness fleeing from the god. . . .

But once the fascination of the artist was in play he did not stop till overcome by physical fatigue."* While his health still allowed, he would take his relaxation in the evening, an ardent frequenter of the play and the opera, a constant diner-out. In all companies, aristocratic, literary or artistic, he was a conspicuous figure, an accomplished man of the world, a brilliant talker. He loved a combat of wits, and the art of fencing in words; his rapier was swift and deadly, skilful in feint and attack, but always graceful and courteous. The antagonist he preferred was the painter-philosopher Chenavard, a man of culture and erudition like himself, but as ponderous and elephantine as Delacroix was nimble and alert.† If, in his Journal, we come across the names of all his distinguished contemporaries mentioned as friends and acquaintances, there is hardly a memoir of the time that does not mention Delacroix. George Sand, in the History of her Life, Dumas in his Memoirs, Liszt in his Essay on Chopin, are among the most interest-

* *L'Art Romantique*—"L'Oeuvre et la Vie d'Eugène Delacroix" *passim*.

† *L'Art Romantique*.

ing of those who have set down their personal recollections of the great artist.

Towards the end of his life, however, all that goes by the name of social pleasure dropped out, and was replaced by one only need, fierce, exacting and terrible—his work, which amounted not only to a passion but a frenzy. His old servant, Jenny Le Guillou, who for thirty years faithfully nursed and cared for him, kept his door with a somewhat jealous devotion, guarding her master alike from indiscreet intrusion and kindly sympathy. She was alone with him when he died on August 13, 1863, of an affection of the chest and throat from which he had suffered for many years. According to the terms of his will, a sale was held of all the works found in his studio. The sale took place six months after his death, and lasted a fortnight, during which time the public crowded to buy at heavy prices the work of the man whom they had neglected and insulted during his lifetime. "It was," says Burtz, his executor and the editor of his letters, a "rehabilitation, an intoxication." Delacroix's instructions as to where and how he should be buried are characteristic of the man and his tastes. "My

tomb," he says, "shall be in the cemetery of Père La Chaise on the heights, in a place a little apart. No emblem, nor bust, nor statue shall be placed upon it; my tomb shall be copied very exactly from the antique or Vignolles or Palladio, in bold relief, unlike the present fashion in architecture." Thus he lies, the great romantic whose dearest passion was for the classics, and thus his art remains in the generations that succeed, "*on the heights, and a little apart.*"

CHAPTER VII

Delacroix's technique—Juxtaposition of colours—Division of tones—Precursor of Impressionists by his observations of light and shade—His execution—His opinions on manual dexterity—On the study and the imitation of the old masters—On Beauty—His antagonism with Ingres—His hatred of Realism—Art an interpretation of Nature—His influence—His place in the history of art

In reading Delacroix's Journal we are chiefly struck by his constant preoccupation with the theoretical side of his art. Never was there a painter less content to be guided merely by his instinct; never one who devoted himself with greater zeal to searching out fundamental principles. All through his life, from first to last, we see him reflecting, inquiring, experimenting; nothing is too abstract for him to ponder over, no detail too trifling to consider. He discusses at length all those problems of æsthetics which for thousands of years have

bewildered and tormented philosophers, and which every artist is called upon to solve in his turn—the meaning of Beauty, the claims of Realism and Idealism, the relationship of Nature and Art and all the various questions that derive from these. Nor is he less absorbed by matters of technique; page after page of his diary is devoted to observations on the different qualities of paints, varnish and mediums, to the discussion of values and reflections, to the consideration, in fact, of every topic that relates to the material side of painting.

The revolution in art which was effected by Delacroix and the Romantics necessitated indeed a completely fresh technique, and it was Delacroix who virtually evolved, or rather re-created, this new technique, based it on the solid foundations of reason and observation, and formulated it in words, both in his diary and in his numerous contributions to art criticism which appeared in the Press.

When David banished from painting the qualities of grace, picturesqueness and charm, alleging the importance of sobriety and simplicity, he changed the current of pictorial

tradition. The pictures produced by him and his school were simple drawings filled in with colours which were dull and monotonous in themselves, and were rendered still more so by their smooth unbroken surface. David, notes Delacroix, eschews the frank, primary colours employed by Rubens, and mixes nearly all his tones with black. David, moreover, with his rigid ideas of conscientiousness considered that the proper method of painting a picture was to finish completely one portion before going on to the next. This is apparent in his unfinished picture at the Louvre, of *Le Serment du Jeu de Paume*, in which the heads are minutely finished, while the figures and other parts of the picture are merely outlined. It will be obvious that with such a system of colouring it would be impossible to render the variety of effects sought after by Delacroix—the play of light and shade, gradation of tones, reflections, transparency, texture ; equally impossible in a work in which each portion is terminated successively to give an impression of cohesion and unity, and to create an atmosphere of light and air which shall permeate the whole picture. Delacroix

was therefore obliged to abandon the technique which had sufficed the Davidian school, and to revert to the methods of the old masters. He sketches in his whole picture as rapidly as possible, giving a broad and summary indication of sky, landscape, architecture and figures, so that his general conception is at once embodied. He then continues to work at every portion of the picture in turn, and in such a manner that the whole is carried on simultaneously. Thanks to this method, he was better enabled to subordinate detail to broad effect, to fit each colour into the general scheme of harmony, and to tune his values to the pitch of the whole. During the actual course of execution he could modify at will a high light or an outline, and subdue or accentuate colours and values without ever losing sight of the unity of the picture. It was indeed, with consummate art that Delacroix brought into play and harmonised all the complex resources which this manner of painting put at his disposal, avoiding with equal skill monotony and discordance. Delacroix reverted also to the methods of the old masters as regards the more material part of his art. Like them, he

made use of preparations; that is to say, he prepared his canvas by painting in his picture partly with thick and solid, partly with transparent and fluid colours, all destined to serve merely as a foundation. This is what Titian called making the picture's bed. It is a method, by means of which the painter can obtain a finer and more varied surface, and one which can be more easily rendered appropriate to each portion of the picture. He returned also to the old-fashioned custom of using colours which he had prepared and mixed beforehand. These were the lessons he learnt by studying the old masters, chiefly Rubens and Veronese. But his personal contributions to the technique of painting were of the very greatest importance.

It was Delacroix who first discovered a fact which lies at the root of the development of modern painting. Earlier painters had, doubtless, produced many of their colour-effects by an instinctive or traditional use of contrasting colours, but it remained for Delacroix to bring all his powers of observation and reflection to bear on the singular manner in which colours are modified by their juxtaposition. It is

related that he was first struck by this fact while working at the robes of the Doge and Senators, in *Marino Faliero*. Finding that all his efforts were vain, and that the purest and most powerful yellows left his picture cold and dull, he determined to go to the Louvre and seek counsel of Rubens. Chance brought to his door a canary-coloured cab ; as he was stepping in he noticed that under the box where the yellow was brightest the shadows were a deep violet ! That day he went no further. In an instant he was back again in his studio. He had accidentally lighted on the law of complementary colours which many years later was to be the great scientific discovery of Chevreul. From that moment he made a constant study of the manner in which colours affected each other, and in order to arrive at the effect he desired, he would make use of assortments of different-coloured wafers, which he would stick up and look at from a distance with half-shut eyes. To prove the importance he assigned to the juxtaposition of colours, he was fond of saying that he could paint a fair and gleaming Venus with mud out of the street, provided he might

put the colours he chose in the rest of the picture.

Delacroix also, with the happiest results, made use of a method of applying his paints which has since become very general. He observed, while painting his large canvases, that tones which were laid on by means of separate and well-defined touches produced at a distance an equal effect of unity, and an impression of far greater depth and power, than when the paint was applied with uniform smoothness. He was thus the first to put into practice the principle of the "division of tones" on which the Impressionist school based its technique, and which has been exaggerated by certain artists to the extent of laying on the colour not merely in separate strokes but in minute and multicoloured points. He may also be considered the precursor of the Impressionists by his observation of the reflections cast by objects on each other. He made a constant study of this phenomenon, and his Journal is full of notes relating to it. "There are no shadows, properly so-called," he writes, "there are only reflections."* "In

* Journal, vol. iii. p. 201.

all shade—or rather in all half-tone effects—each surface should have its own particular reflection; for instance, all surfaces turned towards the sky should be bluish; those turned towards the ground, warm, &c. And the reflections should be changed carefully, according as the surfaces turn; surfaces turned towards the side should be grey or green."*

Delacroix's workmanship was brilliant and spirited. In order to acquire decision and promptitude of eye and hand, he was in the habit of making daily copies of drawings or engravings with a few characteristic strokes. Every morning he used, as we have seen, to spend a considerable time preparing his palette with an innumerable series of tones. This enabled him to find with more certainty the exact shades he had previously made use of, thus giving greater unity to his colouring and—still more important—facilitating the rapidity of his execution. Thus equipped, his tools in perfect order, his eyes alert, his hands swift and dexterous, he attacked his work, as Baudelaire says, with the fury of a tiger springing on its prey. As the picture

* Journal, vol. i. p. 143.

neared completion, then was the moment to see him and to realise the excellence of his methods. With feverish energy he seemed to weld every portion together, heightening a light here, attenuating a shadow there ; each part in turn responded to the quick decisive touch, till at last the spirit of the whole was evoked, and the work that had seemed sleeping kindled into life.

Brilliant though his execution was, Delacroix, nevertheless, was always on his guard against mere virtuosity, and continually condemns manual dexterity as "foolish cleverness" when it is unaccompanied by feeling. Under the heading *The abuse of cleverness among the French*, he writes in his journal, "The French put too much of it in their works. . . . The painter thinks less of his subject than of showing off his skill. Hence that brilliant execution, that masterly touch, those admirable bits. Alas! unhappy man! while I am admiring your skill, my heart is chilled, and my imagination folds its wings. This is not the method of the real great masters. Doubtless they are not without the charm of execution ; on the contrary ; but it is not that barren and material

execution which can only be admired as a *tour de force*. The fact is, real abnegation of vanity is required in order to dare to be simple, if indeed one has enough talent to be so. The proof is that even the great masters nearly always begin by this abuse. In their youth, when they are overpowered by the number of their qualities, they give the preference to exuberance and dexterity, and had rather be brilliant than touching."* In speaking of Caraccio's drawings for the Farnese Palace, he writes: "His cleverness predominates over his feeling; his execution and his touch run away with him in spite of himself; his knowledge is too great; and as he no longer studies, he never discovers anything new or interesting. This is the stumbling-block that arises in the progress of art, and it is inevitable."† And he goes on in words which we may still lay to heart. "What is to be said of the schools of the present day which care for nothing but this deceitful cleverness? In Leonardo the touch is invisible; he moves us by his feeling alone. I remember the time when I was constantly blaming myself for not being able

* Journal, vol. i. p. 204. † *Id.* vol. ii. p. 278.

to acquire that dexterous execution which our schools accustom the best among us to consider as the last term of art. My bent has always been towards imitating simply and ingenuously, and I envied the facile brush and artful touch of Bonington and others. I mention a man who was full of feeling, but who was carried away by his hand; and this sacrifice of the noblest qualities to an unfortunate facility has caused his works to fall in estimation, and has stamped them with the mark of weakness."*

Few painters have worshipped the old masters with more constancy and devotion than Delacroix. In his student days, as we have seen, he spent much of his time in the Louvre, copying in especial the works of the great decorators, Veronese, Raphael, Velasquez and Rubens. Of all these, it was perhaps Rubens who appealed to him most. All through his life Rubens' abounding power, his spirits, his brilliance, the fair lusciousness of his flesh, filled him with enthusiasm. "I love his emphasis; I love the exaggeration, the loose abundance of his forms; I love them with all the strength of my scorn for the sugared

* Journal, vol. ii. p. 279.

dolls who go into ecstasies over the fashionable paintings of the day and Monsieur Verdi's music."* But in spite of his admiration, Delacroix's clear judgment prevented him, even at the beginning of his career, from falling into the error of imitating the great painters of old. "They are as dangerous as they are useful," he writes, "they bewilder or dishearten artists, and they furnish critics with terrible arms against all originality."† As he grew older he insisted more strongly still on the importance of seeking inspiration in oneself. "We must free ourselves utterly from that fanaticism which urges us, nearly always blindly, to imitate the great masters, and swear only by them. We must say: 'Such a thing is right for Rubens, such another for Raphael, Titian or Michael Angelo. What they did was their affair. I am bound by nothing and no one.' One must learn to make use only of what one has found oneself; a handful of unsophisticated inspiration is preferable to anything."‡

The idea of Beauty conceived by academies

* Journal, vol. i. p. 282.
† *Id.* vol. iii. p. 96.
‡ *Id.* vol. i. p. 194.

and schools as something absolute, as the nearest approach to Raphael, or Guido, or the ancients, or whatever the fashion of the day might be, filled him with contempt. "Our painters are enchanted to have a beau ideal all ready made. . . . In order to attain this ideal in painting the head of an Egyptian, they make it approach as nearly as possible to an Antinous. 'We have done our best,' they say, 'and if our accuracy makes it fall short of beauty, nature is to blame; ugly, queer nature, and that flattened nose, and those thick lips—all things intolerable to be seen.' . . . What is really ugly are our conventions, our mean arrangements of sublime Nature. What is ugly are our beautified heads, our beautified folds; art and Nature corrected by the passing taste of a few Tom Thumbs, who rap the knuckles of the ancients, the Middle Ages and Nature herself."* Delacroix himself, early understood that the manifestations of Beauty are manifold and contradictory. To all the definitions of the philosophers he preferred Voltaire's saying, that Beauty is whatever causes our mind and senses pleasure and admiration. He understood that if purity

* Journal, vol. i. p. 49.

is one form of beauty, expression is another, and that correctness is not always purity, any more than grimacing is expression.

Delacroix's catholicity of taste and that depth of character which made him rank feeling above the most skilful execution, brought him into incessant conflict with the other great painter of his day, Ingres. Ingres had been brought up by David; he had much of his master's domineering and arbitrary character, and was perfectly qualified to take up his fallen mantle. He carried on the Davidian tradition by his classic drawing and inferior colouring, and contributed to that tradition a certain mannered and Raphaelesque grace of his own. It is as a draughtsman that Ingres attained supreme excellence; he possessed to a marvellous degree the power of interpreting the human figure, and his pencil drawings of the nude equal, and perhaps surpass, those of the greatest of the old masters. To a touch of incomparable suavity he added such wonderful simplification of form, such a power of expressing much with little as can only be seen in some of the best Japanese artists; though these, by not modelling their

figures, elude a great difficulty. Unfortunately as a painter Ingres' best qualities disappear, and many of his oil pictures are poor in colour, dull and lifeless. But Ingres and his admirers could see no salvation save in drawing and line; they affected to consider colour as too "material" for their idealistic art, and with a bigotry they had inherited from David, they poured scorn on all the aims and methods of the Romantics. They would perhaps have been content merely to scorn had they not found among their opponents a man great enough to inspire them with uneasy hatred; they felt yet could not understand his power, and all his life long Delacroix was the target of their venomous abuse. Ingres himself was the most violent; it was inconceivable to him that a man who sacrificed beauty of line to colour and passion should be possessed of common honesty. "Drawing, Sir, is the probity of art!" he exclaimed one day, when he met Delacroix in a lady's drawing-room, and, dashing down his cup of coffee, he left the room without another word. Delacroix was too much of a gentleman to condescend to such methods, but he was too human not

to resent them. His outward attitude was always correct, but we can trace his bitterness in many of the appreciations of Ingres recorded in his private diary, and the following extract from a letter to Thoré shows the inherent antagonism of the two men: "Your article on Ingres is perfect; you have struck the right note; no one hitherto has pointed out his radical vice, that absence of heart, soul and reason, of all, in fact, that touches *mortalia corda*."

But if Delacroix disliked the academic and the neo-classic, if he had no patience with seekers after the beau ideal, he was still more vehement in his hatred of the realist. "Accursed realist! Do you wish to create such an illusion as to make me fancy that I am really present at the scene you are pretending to show me? Why! it is the cruel reality of things that I am fleeing from, when I take refuge in the sphere of the creations of art." He attacked Courbet's realism all the more violently because he recognised his talent and his extraordinary skill as a workman; he sincerely admired portions of his picture, and even calls one of his works a masterpiece.

Nevertheless, after visiting an exhibition of Courbet's he cannot refrain from ejaculating in his diary, "Oh, Rossini! Oh, Mozart! Oh! all you inspired geniuses who, in whatever art, are able to extract from things only so much as should be presented to our minds, what would *you* say to these pictures? Oh, Semiramis! Oh, entry of the priests for the coronation of Ninias!"*

This question of the interpretation of Nature, perhaps the most important that the plastic arts have to deal with, preoccupied him greatly. "Nature," Baudelaire tells us Delacroix was in the habit of saying, and we find the same idea repeated in his journal; "Nature is like a dictionary; we look out our words in it, their derivation, their etymology, all the elements in fact that go to compose a sentence or a story, but no one has ever considered the dictionary as a composition in the poetical sense of the word." Delacroix was never tired of upholding this truth which seemed to him as clear as it was essential. Art is not an exact and literal transcription of Nature, but a welding together by man's mind

* Journal, vol. ii. p. 160.

of elements found in Nature. It is the artist's duty and his right to choose these elements and to group them in the manner he pleases in order to produce the effect he desires. He may deal as he will in his works with the sights that surround him, exaggerating one detail suppressing another, simplifying, generalising, accentuating or attenuating according as his imagination dictates; he may even falsify the laws of nature, if by so doing he can increase the power or the poetry of his conception. Goethe has put this view of the function of art in a striking manner. Eckermann relates that Goethe once pointed out to him in a picture by Rubens that the shadows were cast in two opposite directions, but that Rubens was right to commit this error against the laws of nature, for he has thus made his work more eloquent. "The artist," he went on to say, "is in a double relation towards nature; he is at once its master and its slave; its slave in that he is obliged to work with earthly means in order to be understood; its master in that he bends these means to his will and makes them serve his high intentions. It is by a united whole that the artist wishes to speak

to the world; but this whole is not to be found in nature, it is the fruit of his own mind."

When we come to consider Delacroix's influence on the development of his contemporaries and successors we must recognise the fact that it was both singularly far-reaching and curiously restricted. At the beginning of his career painting had been shorn of nearly all its glory; without colour, without mystery, without passion, poor and maimed, it crept on a broken wing. When he died, and thanks mainly to his genius, to his labour, to the powers of his mind, the art he loved was again reinstated mistress of her great domain; colour he gave her back, light and shade, the courage to be sincere, the liberty to express whatever may touch humanity. But he left behind no school, no disciples. Of all the painters who imitated him, not one is remembered to-day, except Chassériau, who endeavoured to combine the conflicting qualities of Ingres and Delacroix, and whose curious attempt had a beneficial influence upon Puvis de Chavannes. The generation that succeeded Delacroix, indeed, while profiting by the master's technical discoveries, drew no

inspiration from his spirit. The current of art in France turned aside and no longer set in the direction of the heroic, the dramatic, the romantic; historical painting became less and less the fashion, till to-day it is practically extinct. Instead, the taste arose for simple and domestic subjects, for ordinary life and familiar landscape. Millet became the painter of fields and farms and peasants at their work; Corot, towards the end of his life, abandoned his Italian landscapes, his nymphs and Pans, to paint the well-known scenes that lay around his own home. The most illustrious representatives of modern art, Manet, Whistler, Degas, drew their sources from the realism of Courbet and Daumier, rather than from the Romanticism of 1830. The Impressionists, it is true, took as their starting-point Delacroix's remarkable observations on light and shade and reflection, on the juxtaposition of colours and the division of tones; but their spirit is absolutely opposed to the lofty grandeur of his imaginative creations.

Delacroix is in truth an isolated peak. His works resemble those of no other master, ancient or modern. They bear, indeed, a

certain outward resemblance to the works of Rubens and the Venetians, but the soul that breathes from them is totally different. The dominant tone of the great Flemish and Italian decorators is joy, joy in the fulness and splendour of life, touched sometimes by a note of gentle melancholy, rarely if ever by the sense of tragedy. There is no joy in Delacroix; his colouring, rich and strong as it is, is never gay, is often sombre and violent and livid, with storm-charged atmosphere and lowering skies. The great painters of suffering have been rare in all times. It is true that certain of the early painters, German, Spanish and Italian, have given us representations of suffering, which, however, is rather physical than moral, and which shows itself chiefly by contorted features and writhing bodies. Amongst the old masters it is perhaps Michael Angelo alone who, like Shakespeare and Dante in other spheres, has stamped upon his work the anguish of a mighty mind. In this he is the only painter to whom we may fitly compare Delacroix. Like him, Delacroix has translated the despairing revolt of the impotent and the crushed submission of the weak in the grasp of fatality. To the

tragedy of human life, which is common to every age, he has added the breath of modern scepticism. With him fatality is no longer a god, the righteous if wrathful Christ, who judges as he hurls to perdition ; it is a blind and senseless power, punishing the innocent and the guilty alike, and reserving its worst cruelties for beauty and love, for generous youth, for childhood and old age.

It is to a world of emotion that lies beyond the reach of words that Delacroix has given expression, and the power of his evocation is such that whatever his faults, his failures, his shortcomings, they are forgiven and forgotten. His imagination, his sympathy, and his pity have built for us an immortal bridge to bear our hearts and minds to those divine regions which mankind can never enter save by the help of art alone.

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